CURRENT NOTES

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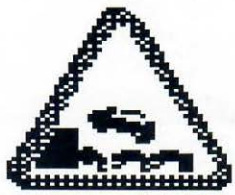

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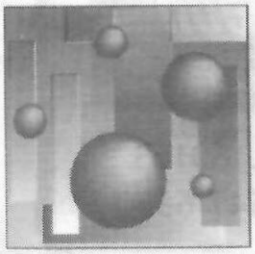
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Editorial Production Comments Etc

Don't expect to see a column like this in every issue. We do not normally feel the need to pound any drums, shoot any sacred cows or otherwise get in your face on a regular basis. Some of our writers can do that better than either one of us. (Why do you think the guy is called "Razor" Reikel? "Cause he likes to have a close shave? Anybody who thinks that shouldn't be out in public unescorted.)

After our the first issue hit the streets we heard and read a number of comments. Before we get to those, a small apology. There was a discrepancy between the way we thought would be best (i.e. fastest and easiest) to get your copy of Current Notes in the mail, and the way Canada Post thought would be best (i.e. follow the regulations).

We had to do it their way of course. But it meant another short delay (24 hours) for our U.S. and overseas subscribers and, at the same time, our labeling system manage to resist all our efforts to be completely organized. We could not get it to use the USPS Bar Codes which we hope (perhaps vainly) might speed delivery to our southern neighbours. More importantly we could not get your expiry date onto your label.

From now on, your subscription expiry date will appear on your label, on the top line of your label with each issue. In addition, those people whose subscription expires with the current issue will have their label marked with a highlighter pen. So if you have a coloured stripe across your label, it's time to renew, or you will miss the next issue.

Letters . . . we get letters

Yes, we got letters, we got email, we got telephone calls. Not all of you were completely complimentary. Not many were totally derogatory. Thank you for your support. Even criticism indicates you read the issue. And that's why we are doing this, to put out a magazine which people will read, and will talk about. So keep those cards and letters and email and calls coming. We do not promise to change everything you don't like. We may not repeat something you love. But we will keep working to make Current Notes better.

You liked the stylistic changes. Good! We do too. We are in an industry which never looks backwards, and we want to point Current Notes readers to the future.

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8 Bit:

Some liked the absence of 8 bit material. Some miss it. We will print quality material about Atari computing: 8 bit, 16 bit, 32 bit, we don't discriminate. We are looking for original articles which have something to offer to our readers. If you want 8 bit information, you may have to provide it for us. There is not a big pile of it waiting to be grabbed up and included in Current Notes.

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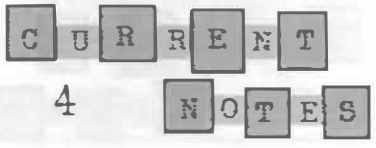

opinion, sense, nonsense, political reality

FUTURES

robert boardman

Home Offices are all the rage . . . and there are good reasons and bad reasons to follow the trend. There are also deep, dark pitfalls. Read on . . .

Last issue I talked about some basic decisions: whether or not to have a home office, reasons for, not too many reasons against, and even a little history. I received a number of comments from readers for which I am thankful. The more comments we get the better we can make Current Notes.

Next time I hope to talk about the thorny issue of copyright. Apparently there have been some legislative moves in the U.S.A. to make periods of copyright longer. Since Current Notes is published in Canada, American rules do not apply to us; Canadian copyright law tends to follow English common law. However, they may some effect on readers, and other governments may follow suit. Copyright is an issue which has been part of the lives of all computer users since the very beginning of computing. Let me know what you think, and I'll try and respond to your concerns as I put my article together next time.

As promised last time, I am going to look at equiping the home office. On the assumption that you have decided on your own, or have been told by your employer that you need to have a home office, what do you put in it? If you are working for someone else, the first response is to put in it whatever they tell you to put in it. How can you make sure what you get is what you need?

One of the easiest ways to get information is to ask for it. What do you need in your home office? What do others who are doing similar tasks in their home offices have? How satisfied are they with that equipment? Does what they have do the job that needs to be done efficiently and painlessly? It is this last question which will generate the most varied responses.

Efficiently and painlessly – those are the two criteria I use to measure the value of any machine around my home or my office. Does it do the job it is supposed to do, does it do the job better than any other piece of equipment I have or can afford? And – does it do the job with an absolute minimum of fuss, "tweaking" in computer jargon? Can I train any public school graduate off the street to do the mechanical parts of job in almost the same time as I do them?

That's what you want out of your equipment. It has got to be as easy to use as a toaster or a telephone or a TV remote. Push this button, then this one, then this one, now wait for this to happen, now you are done. If it requires more steps, more knowledge, more understanding of how the machine works, then you are not going to use it regularly. It will become an expensive door stop or table decoration. If you need to read the manual the tenth time you do a task, then the machine is too complicated or badly engineered or both. Settle for something simpler.

The other side of the question is, of course, what is the job that needs doing? Suppose you are a sales person and you have to produce a weekly report of your activities. What is the job? Do you have to dictate the report to a deparmental secretary who makes sure it gets printed and delivered to the right people? Do you have to send email to your manager which includes the weekly summary? Do you have to submit copies of a printed report at the weekly Friday afternoon sales meeting? Do you have to submit a WordPerfect–compatible or Lotus–compatible or Quark–compatible file? The answers to these questions are critically important if your home office is an extension of your employer's office or place of business.

If your major input into the business is in the form of text files then it is important you match what the people at work are doing. If the text files you send require extensive formatting work by someone at the office, then your supervisor may not want you to work from home. On the other hand, if your text input is (and has always been) imported into a dtp

programme, then probably a standard ASCII file (or perhaps an RTF file) will be all that is required.

You should also examine the degree of complexity of your documents. It is difficult to generate a complex file, including graphics and/or charts and/or Text Art in a WordPerfect–compatible format without having WordPerfect to do the work. Despite the claims of all of the major word processors (WordPerfect and MS Word being the two most popular), complex files are usually not interchangeable. I have even seen one of the major word processors completely mangle all of the coding generated by another major word processor, even when those files have been exported in RTF and in ASCII formats. Quite amazing, considering these two file formats are supposed to be the two lowest common denominators in computer text exchange.

I have seen similar "translation" difficulties between three of the major Windows spreadsheet programmes as well. And that was with programmes which were all the latest releases. The results which come from exchanging data between a DOS version of one spreadsheet with a Windows version of another can be quite hilarious, as long as it's not your report that is being made into mincemeat.

Graphics and graphics using / generating programmes used to be the worst offenders. However, there is now some interchangeability between the various programmes and most include a variety of import filter for different graphics formats. The same is not true of most dtp and presentation graphics programmes. If it is done in Powerpoint for example, don't expect to be able to bring your annual report into Quark in order to generate printed copies for everybody. You should plan on having time to put two files together, one for slides (Powerpoint) and one for the printer (Quark).

Find out what works and what does not. If your employer is willing or able to duplicate (or move) what you would have if you worked at "the plant" in your home, then compatibility is not an issue. Whether your employer expects you to supply your own equipment, since it was your idea to work from home, or if you have an independent home business spend some time doing startup tests. Test, test and test again. What software packages work with each other? What does "compatible" really mean? Push your software hard before you have to meet a deadline. Try to make it crash. Keep a record of what you do in each test. Be sure you can move information from one system to another effortlessly, before your job and your mortgage depend on you doing it right.

What to buy or borrow to set up a computerized office at home?

I am not going to make specific brand name recommendations – I'll get myself in trouble no matter what I say. You may find after your testing process that only one kind of computer will do for the work you have to do to earn a living. My main income source right now requires I have a computer at home which is compatible with Novell Netware so I am able to trouble shoot problems from home at night or on weekends. However, for Current Notes, (and any other dtp project I can think of) I would not dream of using any other platform than an Atari and any other dtp programme than Calamus SL. Your job description is almost certainly different from mine, so your equipment will also be different. Having said all that, here's some basic recommendations.

1) A modem, preferably a fax–modem.

Get a modem – if you own a computer and don't have a modem already, go out tonight or this weekend and get one! (If your main computer is an Atari, the modem will bring information to you which will help you stay with Atari.) Get at least a 14,400 baud/bps (I never remember which one is correct) fax–modem. I recommend an external modem. It can be shared by 2 or more computers just by moving a cable. The little lights tell you whether or not the thing is doing what you want. And when you change computers, the external modem will work with the next one, an internal one may not. And I believe internal modems are not available for Atari computers. A 14.4 external fax–modem will set you back less than $100, and it will be one of the best investments you ever make. The newer, faster 28.8 (that's 28,800 baud/bps) moves data twice as fast as the slightly older ones for about twice the money. However, if most of your work with your fax-modem will be as a fax, remember most fax machines operate at a top speed of 9600 baud/bps. If you are on a tight budget, perhaps the 14.4 will be sufficient for now.

2) An answering machine (or a phone answering service).

Somebody has to answer the phone when you are out making sales calls or deliveries or at a meeting at the "real" office or when you are too busy to pick up the phone. Many phone companies (Bell Canada in particular) are aggressively marketing their versions of "voice mail." Investigate that option as well as another machine that sits on your desk and clutters up space. Here in Toronto year's worth of Bell voice mail costs less than many answering machiens.

3) A word processor you are comfortable.

Make sure it has a good spell checker with a large dictionary, over 100,000 words is a number to look for. Make sure it can be customized for your industry's jargon. We all make typing mistakes, and nobody can successfully proofread their own work. Let the machine do it for you. And look for a word processor which can export text in ASCII and RTF formats in addition to its own native format. If you plan to use a spreadsheet with the word processor make sure they can share files easily, quickly and correctly.

4) A spreadsheet programme you feel comfortable with.

If you don't want to get a database programme, then get a spreadsheet

which can do sorts (imitate a simple database), and preferably one which has a macro language. You don't have to use it for accounting, but you can use it to keep track of appointments, phone calls, money people owe you, etc.

5) An Internet account.

A SLIP/PPP connection is not needed, but an Internet provider which has access to the World Wide Web as well as email and news groups is becoming essential. I don't say this just because I want you to send me email. Once you understand how to use the basic search tools on the Internet you can get more up-to-date information on your area of interest or expertise faster from Internet sources than from any other source I can think of. It takes a little time to get used to the disorderliness (and sometimes bizarre nature) of the Internet, but the benefits outweigh the struggle.

6) A good quality, high resolution non-interlaced monitor, the larger the better.

If you are going to stare at the screen for more than 20 minutes at a time, be kind to your eyes. Get the biggest, cleanest, brightest screen you can afford. Make sure it runs with the rest of your equipment. If you are working exclusively (or almost exclusively) in dtp and generating monochrome output, then get a monochrome screen. Otherwise most people learn to like colour screens, particularly 256+ colour screens very quickly. Be kind to your body parts. They are easily replaced.

7) A solid desk set at a comfortable height.

Get one which will take two or three times the weight of the stuff you already want to put on it. You will add to the load regularly.

8) An adjustable chair.

Probably the single most important item for taking care of your body is making sure you are typing or using a mouse at a height which is the best for your arms, your back, your shoulders, your wrists, and even your legs. An adjsutable chair is a way to make the desk and machine fit your body. You can probably get some good advice about setting all the pieces up from a friendly chiropractor or occupational therapist or physiotherapist or even somebody in the office.

9) A filing cabinet. (It's suprising how much paper the paperless office generates.) Tax departments and other government offices usually want to see and touch reports.

10) A good printer.

Get a personal laser printer or inkjet printer. Do not use a dot matrix printer (even a 24 pin dot matrix) for business correspondence or anything which has to be read by a professional human being. Your professional image will disappear into the dust. 300 dpi (dots per inch) lasers, with output speeds of 2 - 4 ppm (pages a minute) are inexpensive. High end colour inkjet printers are not much more than low end monochrome lasers, and colour does make an impact. But do some research into what you need and what the long term costs could be. Remember: most office photocopiers will turn your fancy colours into shades of gray.

If you use NCR paper for invoices and other multi-part forms you will need an impact printer, probably a dot matrix. But please don't be tempted to think it is adequate for all your printing.

Notice I haven't said anything about the platform (i.e. CPU type). Granted, you have to match the software to the CPU, but make the choice of what type of computer to obtain based on the results of the information gathering process. All of the presently available computers (IBM/Intel 386+, Amiga, Mac, ST/TT/Falcon, and compatibles) are pretty much equivalent in their ability to the secretarial and clerical work of your office. Even many of the ten year old 8-bit systems (130XE, IBM-XT, Commodore 64/128) can do most of these tasks, with the probable exception of using a laser printer. And, of course, today's software won't run on them. What should be the deciding factor is the question I raised near the beginning of this article: Does it do the job that needs to be done efficiently and painlessly? ▲

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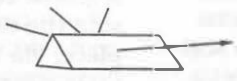

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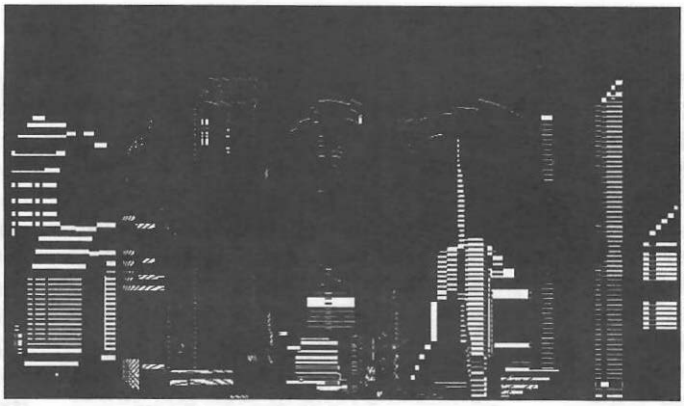

Think of it: the Greater Metropolitan Toronto Phone Book (Yellow Pages), lists approximately 111 retail computer dealers, 42 computer repair companies and 100 wholesalers and suppliers, give or take a few; a total of 253 companies which regularly purchase hard drives. Some purchase directly from the factories, some from distributors and some from out of the back of a Van. But however they get their supply of drives, somewhere, somehow, the drives had to be manufactured. On average, 15 drives are sold every week, by each and every one of the companies listed above, for a total of 3,795 drives per week. On average, all of the companies are open for 50 weeks every year: 50x3795=189,750 drives.

That's a lot of hard drives. But the yearly total of 189,750 drives only accounts for Toronto. Computing (for business and personal reasons), is just as popular in Toronto as it is in Montreal, Bangor, Vancouver, New York, Saskatoon, L.A., Sherbrooke, Joplin, Thompson, Baltimore, Edmonton, Macon, Halifax, San Antonio, Winnipeg, New Orleans, St. John's, Buffalo, Sudbury, Pensacola, Regina, Chicago, Calgary, and every other city & town in Canada, the U.S., Japan, France, Brazil, Argentina, Taiwan, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Holland, Sweden, Egypt, Isreal, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Guam, Indonesia, England, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and on, and on.

Now THAT'S a lot of hard drives: literally, tens of millions. The sheer size of the market is providing ample opportunities for corrupt manufacturing, sales, and distribution practices. For example, there are at least two dozen factories (small ones) scattered throughout Taiwan, Indonesia, China, Northern Asia, and the Indian sub-continent which do nothing but make 'grey-market' hard drives. These drives carry names such as Quantum, Seagate, Connor and Maxtor, though they are not made by those companies. The drives also come with unusually short warranties (or faked standard warranties which Quantum, Seagate, et al, will not honor because or course, they didn't really manufacture the drives). The aforementioned dealers and suppliers which sell these drives to the public, often do not know where their inventory actually originated. Recently, a hard drive manufacturer was convicted of not honoring repair warranties for what were supposed to have been grey-market drives, but which turned out to have been made by them (deliberately) in a grey-market factory(!), for the sole purpose of being able to reap profit without having to fulfill warranty obligations. It's all so conspiratorial and underhanded, it reeks. We don't know what we're buying. A medium-sized Toronto firm recently returned four, large hard drives for repair. The (regional) factory representative told the firm that because he wasn't absolutely certain the drives were actually grey-market, the warranty would be honored. The regional rep is the same dude who sold the drives to the firm in the first place, via a co-operative deal with an OEM distribution firm! Obviously, things change quickly in the electronics business. The OEM supplier had obviously fallen from favor.

Point Number One: US/Canada Customs can't keep up, and neither can the FBI/RCMP. Unless there are a series of specific complaints which focus attention on a problem such as grey-market hard drives, none of the federal agencies' limited resources will be spared for independent investigation. In other words, if you own an illegal factory in Taipei, Quangxiao, Surabaya, Poonamali, St. Petersburg or a couple of dozen other cities, you've got a licence to print money. Make a few drives, hire a salesman, send him to Canada or the U.S., take orders like crazy (your prices are bound to be much lower than the 'real' manufacturers'), claim a 20,000 hour MTBF (Mean Time Before Failure), ship somewhere close to on-time and you've got it made. In the current marketplace, it really is a licence to print money.

One of the reasons that hard drive prices are coming down so quickly therefore, is the price war that has resulted from illegal competition. The fact that profits are fine for the major manufacturers despite the lower priced retail market, is an indication of how good the profit margins were to begin with.

Check out the following conversation; it really took place:

"Hello there Sir," the jolly proprietor said, "how can I help you today?"

"Uh, I'm lookin' for a hard drive," the prospective customer replied, "a big one."

"And how much did you want to spend Sir?", the proprietor asked.

"Well, I don't wanna' say just yet. How much for a 730 meg Quantum?" the customer replied.

"Are you buying today, or just shopping?" the proprietor asked pointedly.

"What's the difference?" said Mr. Customer. "I mean even if I was just

shoppin' around, I could still lie and tell you I was really ready to buy!"

"That's true," the proprietor responded, "but if I thought you were in a buying mood, I'd at least have some incentive to give you a realistic quote."

"What? You mean, like, earn my business? You want to earn my business?"

"No," the proprietor said tightly, "I don't want to earn your business. I just want to sell you a hard drive!"

"Well, I'm actually lookin' for a 730 meg Quantum, for real."

"OK," said the proprietor, taking out his price book, "that's more like it. Let me get you a price." He thumbed through a distributor's catalog until the drive in question was found.

"$365," he announced to the customer.

"What?! Three hundred and sixty five bucks?! Are you nuts?"

"What the heck is wrong with $365?" the proprietor asked, taken aback.

"What's wrong with it? I'll TELL you what's wrong with it," the customer retorted. "I can get it up the street for $309. That's what's wrong with it!"

"A Quantum 730 meg drive? For $309?" the proprietor said incredulously. "No way!"

"Oh yes it is $309," the customer said. "I saw it with my own eyes. It had the Quantum sticker on it and everything, including the one year warranty."

"Uh, that's not a Quantum drive," the proprietor said gently. "Quantum drives have a 3 year warranty."

"Oh yeah?" the customer said quickly, "oh yeah? Well, the guy at the other store said you'd tell me something like that! He just gets a better deal directly from Quantum, in exchange for a shorter warranty. HAH!"

"Look pal," the proprietor said, losing his patience, "first of all, Quantum doesn't sell directly to dealers. Believe me. I know. I've been selling Quantum drives for six years. The guy up the street doesn't know squat about Quantum."

"Well, if you can't beat his price, I'll just get the drive from him anyway. You dealers are all the same. You'll say anything to make a sale!"

The customer left the store, went up the street, and purchased the cheaper drive. And sure enough, two months later, the drive conked out. The fellow returned the drive to the dealer from whence it had been purchased. The dealer informed the distraught customer that since the store was not an authorized Quantum depot (or something), the drive would have to be taken (or sent) to Quantum. Verily the drive was packed, shipped to Quantum, and after a suitable waiting period (6 weeks), fired back to the customer accompanied by a terse note which read, to wit:

'Take this drive and stick it where the sun don't shine. Have a nice day, and next time, buy a *real* Quantum. We don't fix inferior, illegal clones on *our* warranty; we're not as dumb as we look. Actually, nobody's that dumb, except maybe you!'

Guess who walked into the store again, looking for a hard drive? The proprietor had the good sense not to say, 'I told you so'. In the end of course, a real, Quantum, $365 hard drive, wound up costing 674 clams. That's a lot of clams. Plus tax.

Confusion reigns supreme. Controversy ensues. Some people have the audacity to suggest that Quantum is obligated to fix *anything* that carries their stickers. But that's nonsense, perpetuated by vituperative attitudes towards consumer responsibilities; attitudes which belong in the dark ages. Stupidity on the part of a consumer, resulting from a desire to find the lowest price (at any cost!), cannot possibly be ameliorated through the good graces of some factory supported repair service. Consumers who encounter terrible problems because they've violated the proper tenets of fundamental decision making, have only themselves to blame. Suggesting that Quantum is responsible for grey-market products bearing its name, resembles nothing so much as the pathetic whine of the terminally foolish.

Point Number Two: A deal isn't a deal, unless it's 'finished off'. In the traditional vernacular, a 'deal' is more than just a low price. For example, a genuine Quantum hard drive (730 meg, 3 year warranty, purchased from an professional dealer) for $350, is a good deal (at least, it's a good deal as of October '95!). A grey-market Quantum 730 meg drive (with an completely unenforcable 1 year warranty), for $309 is just a lower priced drive. It is most definitely NOT a better deal. And the mere presence of a warranty card accompanying the cheaper drive, with some far-distant return address (of a building that may *never* have existed!), is utterly meaningless.

Thus the old expression, 'if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is', applies with a vengeance. Greed is ugly. So are hard drives that eat all your data. Caveat Emptor!

By all means, make deals. But make sure that what you think is a deal, really IS a deal. If a price is unusually low, make sure the product is new, warrantied, and manufactured by the company whose name appears on the box. Obtain a serial number, call the manufacturer (long distance, if necessary), and check it out. To really save money these days, it's important to think ahead. Remember that a long distance phone call which costs you $10 now, could save you $300 later. ▲

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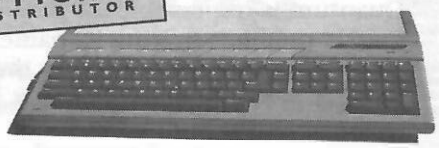

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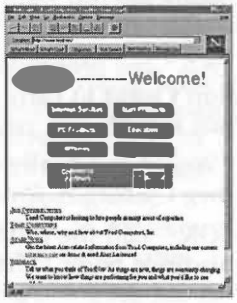

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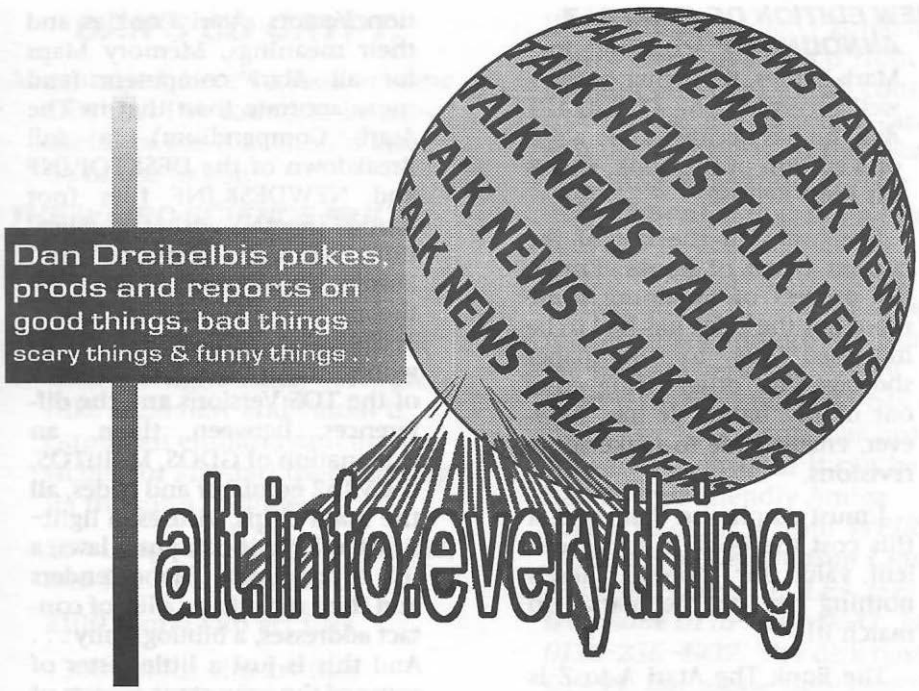

A REAL LIVE WWW ACCESS PROGRAM AT LAST! A World Wide Web (WWW) browser package for the Atari has now been released which does NOT require an alternative operating system in order to run! It's based around a modified version of Alexander Clauss' HTML Web Offline reader (now called CAB) that supports up to 256 colours, and a SLIP access/dialup accessory written by Steve Adam called STiK. The package (currently sitting as of this writing at version 1.07; available for download from a number of BBSes) is designed to run on a minimum ST system of one megabyte and a monochrome monitor, with a hard disk optional but highly recommended. Better results with a TT or Falcon in higher colour resolutions, of course. Although currently freeware (parts of the package may turn into full-blown commercial programs in the near future), it is suggested in the documentation to send a contribution to the authors in appreciation of their work. North American registration is handled through Jeff Wisniewski of ***Dragon's Egg Software, P.O. Box 1243, Newtown PA, 18940-0871 USA***; e-mail: ***jeffrey.wisniewski@microserve.com*** (prefered), or ***dragons-egg@genie.com.*** Try it out and see what you think!

COMPUTER DIRECT ANNOUNCES FALCON CLONE: The Canadian based Computer Direct, maker of the DirecT30 Atari TT clone, has just announced a second TOS clone to their stable, based around the technology in the Falcon. Currently unnamed, it will be based around Falcon Mk1 and Mk2 boards purchased from C-Lab. Planned configurations include a low-cost tower case version and a rack mount version with a folding flat screen monitor for use by road musicians. For more details, contact ***Computer Direct*** at ***10338-59 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6H 1E6,*** phone number 403-496- 2488, e-mail address: ***compdirect@worldgate.com,*** or WWW site: ***http://www.compdirect.com.***

MAGIC3 FOR FALCON, PPC MAGICMAC RELEASED: After what seemed like a very long wait comes a version of Applications Systems Heidelberg's (ASH) MagiC alternative operating system for Ataris that will run on the Falcon030 as well as other TOS-based machines. MagiC3 is a program that completely replaces TOS with its own optimized code, giving the user a much faster machine with speeded up serial port, MIDI and printing routines, accelerated screen output, preemptive multitasking, improved control over enviromental variables, and the ability to run TOS/TTP programs in a GEM window. Also new from ASH is MagiCMac PPC, an alternative operating system for the Apple Macintosh that is designed to run TOS-based software on Apple's PowerPC-based machines and take advantage of the special features these machines have. Result? A very powerful, very fast TOS platform that also runs Mac software alongside it! Available at your Atari dealer now.

SEND IN THE CLONE: First, TOAD Computers has announced new versions of their CHAMELEON PC clone that is specially set up to run a number of operating systems, including TOS on the included GEMULATOR PC board from Darek Michoka's ***Branch Always Software.*** The new versions of CHAMELEON are available in both 486 DX4 and Pentium versions, and feature GEMULATOR4 with Windows '95 and TOS 2.06 installed, as well as Slackware's LINUX, a UNIX clone. Call TOAD at 410-544-6943 or e-mail them at ***info@toad.net*** for further information.

Godfather Computer, a US computer company, is now offering the 'GEMbino'. It's a Pentium-based PC system that also has onboard GEMULATOR4 ST for the best of both worlds. You can get more info from Tom Ferreira at: ercorp@aol.com, or their WWW site at: ***http://www.netrep.com/home/GODFATHER.***

CD–ROMs FOR FALCONS: Word from System Solutions is that two CDs of especial interest for Falcon owners have appeared. First is TRANSMISSION, the first Falcon–only collection of PD/Shareware, demos, music, and games in CD–ROM format. Second, LINUX–68K, a clone of the popular UNIX operating system, is being offered on CD–ROM. It features a GEM–based installation program for setting up the system on your Falcon030 or TT030 (the recommended platforms for the Linux OS). Get in touch with ***System Solutions*** at ***17–19 East Blackwater Street, East Dulwich, London, UK, SE22 8RS.***

ATARI WORLD LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD PEOPLE: Are you an Atari enthusiast? Think you can write for a magazine? If so, Atari World magazine is currently looking for some more writers of the TOS persuasion. All interested parties should get in contact with ***Atari World at: aworld@gal.compulink.co.uk .***

THE OTHER ONE'S GOT BELLS ON IT DEPT: Latest news from Atari Corporation on their promotion of the ***Jaguar!*** Apparently Atari has finalized deals whereby their 64–bit game system will now be carried by ***Wal–Mart, Radio Shack***, and ***Sears Roebuck*** in time for Christmas. And in the case of Sears, it has been confirmed that the Jag IS listed in their US Fall Catalogue. What with the release of the Sony Playstation and the Sega Saturn into the US market, this should prove to be Atari's biggest and best battle yet towards acceptance in the video game market. The addition of Ted Hoff to the Atari team looks as if it's making a BIG difference in their attitude toward their taking a big piece of the game market. They're even running commercials on the US cable networks!

NEW EDITION OF ATARI A–Z ANNOUNCED: According to Mark Baines, the writer of the well–received book ***THE ATARI A–Z,*** he has decided to do a second edition of the book. Here's his Press Release:

I've just sold the last of the current batch of books. I'm in the process of obtaining some more but the price has had to be increased due to the paper shortage and other rising costs out of my hands. It has, however, enabled me to make some revisions.

I must emphasise that even at this cost the book is still excellent value for money. There's nothing else on the market to match it!

The Book The Atari A to Z is produced in A5 format, 340 pages long and contained in a quality ring folder for convenience. It contains 2,238 entries, 101 tables and 128,000 words. There are five appendices – Addresses, Book List, Connectors, Extensions, Atari ASCII set, ANSI Character Set.

Firstly, this is a comprehensive general computing dictionary, there being entries for all the common terms and acronyms found in modern day computing. Like any computer user, Atari users require help with terms not specific to their particular machine. They should be able to find what they want here.

Secondly, there are entries of Atari related terms and acronyms which cover all the Atari computers and consoles. There are expanded explanations and essays, tables and lists which together form a comprehensive inventory of material that The Atari Compendium left out and not found elsewhere. The table of System Variables is more accurate than that in The Atari Compendium. There is a list of Exception Vectors, Atari Cookies and their meanings, Memory Maps for all Atari computers (and more accurate than that in The Atari Compendium), a full Breakdown of the DESKTOP.INF and NEWDESK.INF files (not found in ANY other publication), Errors Messages and Bombs, Pin Connections of all the ports on all the machines, Technical Specifications of the whole Atari range, a Breakdown of the TOS Versions and the differences between them, an explanation of GDOS, MultiTOS, the VT52 emulator and codes, all the main chips, viruses, a light–hearted look at computer laws, a list of common file extenders and their meanings, a list of contact addresses, a bibliography . . . And this is just a little taster of some of the important aspects of this book. The ***Atari A to Z*** is thorough!

The book is only available from:

Linnhe Computing, Linnhe, Shore Street, Inver, Ross–shire, IV20 1SF

Price UK The cost is a very reasonable £13.50 including postage and package. Payment is by Cash, Cheques (drawn on UK banks only) and Postal Orders only. Cheques must be made out to "Mark S Baines".

EEC Including postage – total £15.20 (Eurocheques acceptable) US and Canada Including postage – total £18.20 (Try American Express money orders) Australia Including postage – total £19.30

PLEASE NOTE: Only UK cash, cheques and postal orders (available in Canada and Australia) are accepted. DO NOT send anything else! Ask your bank about the *cheapest* way to send UK money to the UK or just send cash safely wrapped to avoid detection. [Editor's note: not recommended]

DAN'S CD CRYPT:

As promised, here's a look at some CDs that I've found to be most useful to me that should also be of use to you.

THE WEIRD SCIENCE MULTIMEDIA TOOLKIT: This is a CD-ROM that was originally produced for both PC and Commodore Amiga users, but with the right utility software (like GEMview and Paula) it can be an embarrassment of riches for an Atari user! Among its treasures include:

500 image files in HAM, HAM8, and JPEG configuration

2100 mono clip art files

1300 colour clip art files

750 music files in .MOD format

2300 sound samples

80 PostScript fonts in Type 1 format

Going through these, one is stunned by the number and the quality of these files. The JPEGS are particularly gorgeous, with a range of subjects from London and the English countryside, classic and racing cars, animals and birds, to the World Wrestling Federation(?). The only demerit is that not all the files can be accessed via the Atari's CD-ROM drive due to certain quirks in how an Amiga reads its files, though the trouble files are very few. A very good resource, and word has it that a two-CD sequel has just appeared in Britain! It can be had at your friendly Amiga dealer, or order it from ***WEIRD SCIENCE, 1 Rowlandson Close, Leicester, Leics, UK, LE4 2SE; telephone 0116- 234-0632, fax 0116-236-4932.*** The disk costs £19.99, but please note that the company requests that you phone first for details on overseas orders.

COMPO POWER CD VOLUME 1: From Compo Software, this is another collection from Germany of PD/Shareware. The main strength of this volume comes from having full versions of GEMview and the 7UP text editor (albeit in German), and a large number of multimedia files, including 120 MODs, 26 sound files, 13 TIFFs, and 592 GIF files (the latter includes some astounding examples of what can be acheived graphically using the POV raytracing program). Definitely not for everyone's tastes, but a good little sampling of software, some of which has never been seen on these shores. Available through your Atari dealer.

Got news? Announcements? Concerns? Send me what you have and I'll try to fit it in! I can be reached at: ***D.DREIBELBIS*** (GEnie address), or ***d.dreibelbis@genie.com.***

And remember: "with $10,000 we'd be millionaires!" (attributed to Homer J. Simpson) ▲

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RUNNING out of RAM

david barkin and his mutt, wander & wonder

David's got himself a real neat camera. It's d*i*g*i*t*a*l. Uh-huh. The dog's happy now, because that darned flash isn't going off & blinding him anymore . . .

"Well, how do you like it," I asked my customer. He was looking at a two page color spread of the tools and hardware he pedals at only 20 percent over list. The images for the spread had been acquired two days before, while we finalized arrangements over layout, and (most important), my fee. Since the pictures he wanted me to use in his brochure were from box covers and other garbage, he was pleasantly shocked at the quality of the output. By gosh, they did look pretty good! What's nice about this story is that I shot these pictures in his store, using my Digital Camera. I had brought my Atari Notebook along and downloaded over 150 low resolution images, checking them for quality on the spot, went home, loaded them into my TT and laid out the short brochure the same day. Another victory for the computer revolution.

Now let's not quibble over the term 'Atari Notebook'. The truth is, it wears the Apple logo and some might say it's a Mac 520C Powerbook. To me, it's my portable Atari, loaded with Calamus SL, Das Repro, Outline Art III and other assorted software. MagiCMac, the Atari emulator for the Mac, has opened up the opportunity to use the one gadget that I couldn't get for an Atari: a Digital Camera. I've fantasized about digital cameras since I was a small child. This must have been some heavy fantasizing, because it was over thirty five years later that the first digital camera was invented. Still, I seem to remember this hunger. The source of these repressed memories, according to my therapist, is the child abuse I suffered from my first dog, a sexually repressed Pomeranian. At the time I was too innocent to complain to my parents but thanks to modern psychiatric techniques these early memories of abuse are returning. Having spent something like 5,500 dollars on computer equipment this past summer, what's an extra $700? I wanted something just for the hell of it, just to waste some money, just to buy a computer toy, and I did!

Digital photography has come a long way and this Apple Quick Take 150 has many more practical uses than I had anticipated. The quality of images compares favorably with a Polaroid Spectra, and with the aid of Das Repro, the premiere Atari image processing program, I bring them up, almost to the quality of a 110 camera. Thus, this article will discuss photography, digital photography, sticker shock and why I'm not rich.

The latest (free!) update to MagiCMac has been released. It is version 1.2xx. My copy is still in the mail, too late for this article. I understand, that as well as improved speed, full translation into English and support for the FPU, a number of Atari programs which did not run, now in fact do. The only one that I can confirm is TrueImage. This program is the best of the low end Atari Image processing programs and is a real steal at 79 dollars.
On another note, the special MagiCMac version of Calamus is out. Unfortunately this version of Calamus runs no better then the regular version of Calamus. DMC, the distributor of Calamus SL, has never pushed this version of the software. On the other hand the regular version of SL continues to run just fine! In the meantime DMC has discontinued selling the special MagiCMac version until some issues are clarified. I still haven't acquired Power Print, the Mac program which allows Mac's to print to parallel printers but I did find that I can access the Mac serial port through ➡

continued on page after next . . .

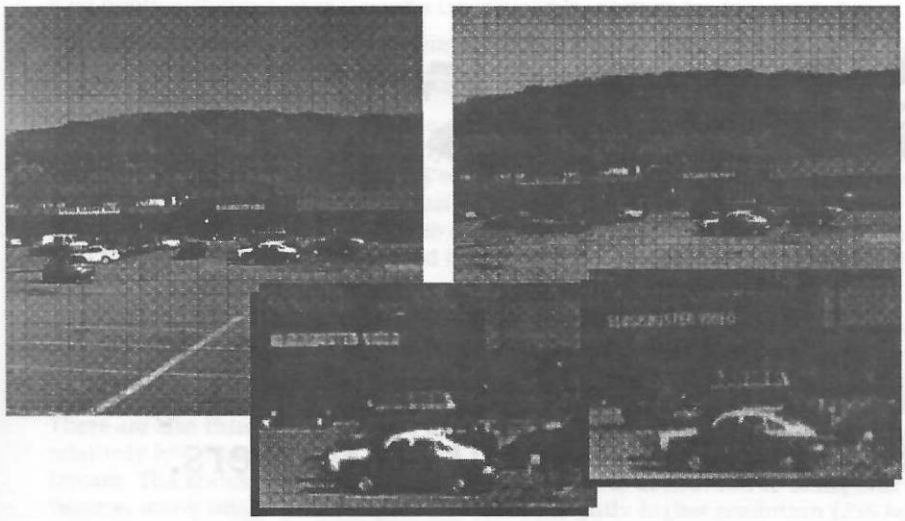

Figure 1. The two pictures on the left are from the Apple Quick Take 150, while the images on the right are from a Polaroid Spectra scanned at 300 DPI. Even though the digital camera has a much lower effective resolution, its superior optics make up for this until the images are expanded. Note the store sign of Blockbuster Video.

Digital cameras, like other elements of computer technology, have developed so fast that even devotee's of change can get left behind if they cease following developments for a year or so. At this moment, it's still not possible to purchase a digital camera as good as a high quality 35 millimeter conventional camera. But things have reached the point where the preceding statement is actually being picky. If you're prepared to spend 30 or 40 thousand dollars, you too can have the equivalent of a 35 millimeter camera. If you do make such a purchase, I would appreciate your lending it to me. (Ed. Note: DON'T give Barkin your camera!)

What do you get for 30 grand? You get a standard 35 millimeter body and lens equipped with huge amounts of high speed RAM and a large capacity removable hard drive where the images are actually stored. Essentially, instead of film, light sensitive LCD cells similar to those used in flatbed scanners, are aligned in the receiving area of the camera where the film is supposed to be. When you take a picture, instead of exposing film you expose these light sensitive cells to the image. Once the image is captured on these cells it is transferred to memory and then to the built–in hard drive. While these cameras are two or three times the size of a conventional camera, they are not particularly clumsy or difficult to lug around. As I said, it is difficult to distinguish the output of these cameras from conventional machines. The advantages to a professional are obvious: (almost) unlimited film, immediate access to the image and (with a good image processing program), immediate access to a darkroom. Another big advantage of digital photography is the ability to instantly mail these images from your location to your office, or any other place that has a modem. This is quite revolutionary and for all of those people who recognize the preceding paragraph as a psychic call for help, feel free to send donations to help me in this quest to be up to date. I absolutely guaranteed that such donations, while not tax deductible, will not be squandered on fancy nightclubs, drugs, booze or even dog food, but will be used for the purchase of the above mentioned camera (Ed. Note: Do NOT send Barkin any money. It was only last week that he was whining about a vacation in Barbados).

What about those $5,000 to $10,000 cameras advertised in computer magazines? The bad news about these machines is that they are actually long distance scanners. While in many cases the image quality is quite high, they must be plugged directly into your computer to work. In other words for ten grand you can get a decent picture, but you'll have to carry your computer around with you to do it. This of course can be quite practical if you're a studio photographer. People have to decide what they need.

The most common advertising you see is for the Leaf Lumina System. For approximately $4,000 you get the camera, another $3,000 gets you a slide adapter and so on. It's called a 'system' because you can keep adding gadgets. Still, for that kind of money you can buy 7 or 8 excellent flatbed scanners with slide and negative adapters.

Before moving on to the lowest level of digital photography, a level where I feel quite at home, one last cautionary note about the above cameras should be mentioned. The files produced by these cameras are quite large. Up to 80 megs on some of them, although this is user definable. In other words, you're going to have to redefine what you need when you think about storage devices. Stop thinking in terms of megabytes and start practicing the word gigabytes, without choking. Taking home a roll of film takes on a new definition. Actually of course a 5 or 10 meg file is the usual output for high quality images, but you never know when an image requires that extra touch. Of course, instead of a cute little

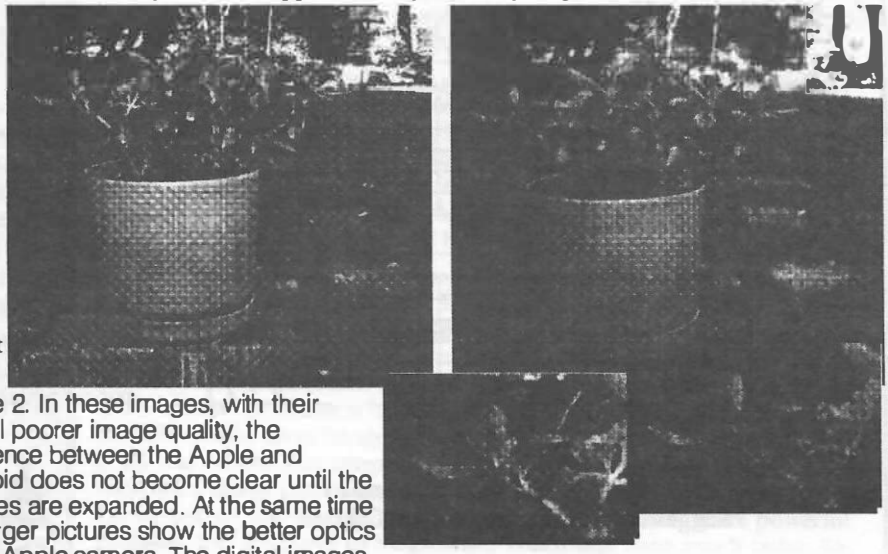

Figure 2. In these images, with their overall poorer image quality, the difference between the Apple and Polaroid does not become clear until the pictures are expanded. At the same time the larger pictures show the better optics of the Apple camera. The digital images are on the left.

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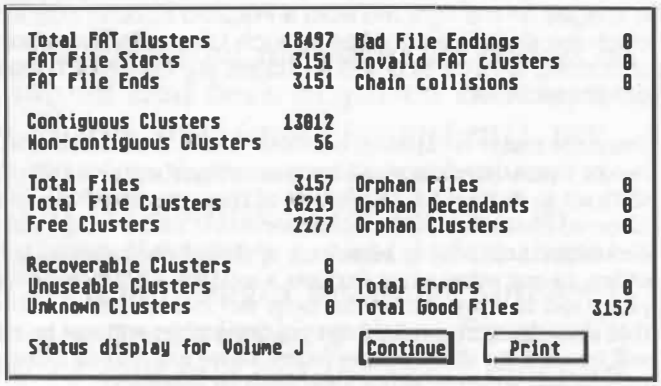
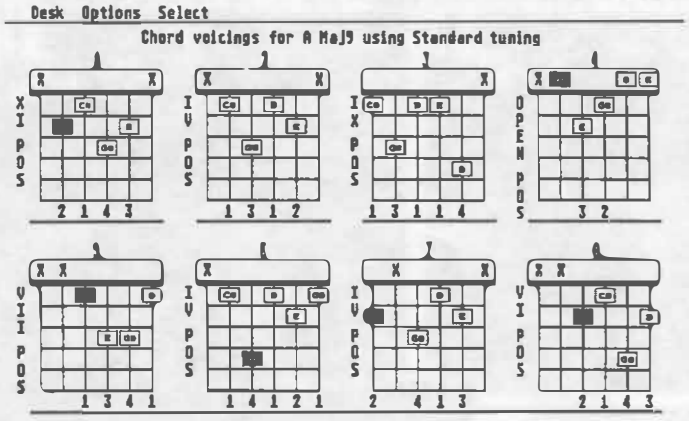
Hard Disk Sentry now includes the Quickopt module that allows for unattended optimization of hard drive partitions. You can specify any partition(s) to be optimized via simple command line parameters. Quickopt will analyze the specified partition(s) and, if no problems are found, it will optimize them. Quickopt will NOT attempt to optimize any drive on which it encounters errors. It will, however, keep a log of all errors it encounters so you may repair them using Sentry.





Guitaristics

Guitaristics is a comprehensive music/education program centered around the guitar. The program is perfect for music students, especially those interested in music theory and jazz improvisation. Guitaristics presents 48 scales and 68 chords. The chords and scales can be independently transposed to any theoretical key from Abb to G###. Chord and scale interaction is instantly analyzed and displayed. Guitaristics will suggest chord substitutions and provide a harmonic analysis of each scale. Additionally, every chord comes with 8 different fingerings. The chord display shows which finger to put on which string in every key!

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Fax: + 1-417-624-0700

case holding floppies, you'll need a couple of file cabinets for Syquest disks.

The Apple Quick Take 150 looks something like a small video camera, and is capable of taking 32 low resolution pictures or 16 higher resolution pictures. These are 24 bit, full color images, after decompression they occupy 924 kilobytes. These images are stored in the camera on RAM chips. You plug the camera into your computer and upload the images. Both high res and low res are 640 by 480 pixels in size and there is only a small (noticeable), difference in quality. I've included some high res photos to show what I'm talking about. For small catalogs, real estate brochures, etc., this quality is more than adequate. It's only when you start to dramatically enlarge these images that you can easily spot the fact that they are generated by a computer. But they hold up quite well up to about 5"x7".

'Whether for digital or conventional photography, it is the optical quality of the lens which makes the image . . .'

The Apple Quick Take has a list price of $739. For that money you get the camera, a close up adapter, & three lithium AA batteries. You'll probably want to purchase an optional power pack for another $79. Without the adapter you can only take about 200 pictures before running down the battery. The powerpack will give you an additional 400 images. There are also third party adapters for additional power. There are at least a dozen other relatively low priced cameras out there from companies such as Kodak, Logitech, and Dycam. The Kodak and the Logitech are identical and in addition to being able to store twice as many images as the Apple also have a slightly higher resolution (756 by 604). For this extra resolution you pay an extra $300 and for the life of me I can't see any improvement in the images. Indeed, the images appear not quite as sharp as the Apple camera. All these cameras, like cheap 110 and Polaroids, have a fixed focus; this usually means 4' (1.22m) to infinity. The Apple has a strong advantage with its close up adapter, which allows taking images which are only 1' (30.5cm) away. Without this adapter I would have been hard pressed to make my wonderful catalogue of hardware tools. I would suggest that anyone contemplating this kind of a purchase get their hands on some hard copy output and then make their own decision.

Whether for digital or conventional photography it is the optical quality of the lens which makes the image. At the high end you can actually purchase cameras which are modified 35 millimeter cameras. You then have a choice of all the lenses which the camera would normally have available. Many of the lower priced units come with their own optical systems. If I ever get rich, a high-end camera and its full range of optics is a definite must. On the other hand, with the low priced digital cameras you get what you get and are happy about it.

For those people who think that a lens is a lens, let me give the following example. The better high end conventional cameras can be fitted with built in proofing devices. A Polaroid Spectra body can actually be attached to these units and the photographer can get an instant look at how the image should be framed and how the light affects the image. With standard Spectra film, the results are almost as clear as the output of a 35 millimeter image. In the examples that accompany this article a standard Spectra was used and while much better then Polaroid 600 film, they are still clearly the output of a Polaroid.

Finally, in this discussion about optics, it should be remembered that the Polaroid images I used were scanned in by a flatbed scanner at 300 DPI. Two results are interesting. First there is a certain amount of image loss from the scan, and of course, they are being printed out at only 600 DPI. Second, in the enlarged portion of my examples the Polaroid images appear very grainy. This is not the fault of the scanner, but rather the grainy nature of the film which is revealed by this image expansion.

All of these digital cameras come with software for downloading and elemental image manipulation. The Apple comes with a program called Photoflash and an Accessory to download images from the camera. Photoflash is a surprisingly powerful image manipulation program. It allows you to crop, rotate, enhance, balance color and use quite a few other effects. In addition it allows you to use any Photoshop plug-in module. It also saves images in a variety of formats including TIF, GIF, JPEG and others. The program lacks any drawing tools. For those familiar with Atari Image processing programs it would compare well with Studio Photo (minus the drawing tools). TrueImage is a much more powerful program and of course in MagiCMac, TrueImage runs much faster. So there's no reason to use Photoflash.

MagiCMac and can in fact print from Calamus to my Hewlett Packard 855C printer. This printer has both a parallel and Mac serial port connection and Calamus actually prints faster through this port then my Mac software does. Once again this is a by-product of the faster Atari OS.

Another new development for MagiCMac is the imminent release (scheduled for early November), of the Power PC version. This means that people who are about to purchase PowerMacs will be able to take their Atari's with them! This also brings the emulation debate to a new high. The PowerMac is not a 680x0 however, but rather a completely new chip. Mac software actually runs in emulation. Thus, these very powerful machines run Mac software only 20% to 50% faster than a normal 68040 Mac does. The expression 'Native Mode' means software specifically written for the Power PC chip. Third party developers have succeeded in creating much faster emulation than the Apple people provided, doubling the above figures. The Power PC version of MagiCMac, aside from running Atari programs an average of twice as fast as Mac programs, also takes advantage of these third party speed doublers. At any rate we have an emulator running on an emulator and comparing favorably to native software. It's enough to get tongue twisted. I've been told that this first version of the →

Actually there is one very good reason. The image compression of the camera is absolutely astounding. A decompressed file which measures almost 1 meg is stored in the camera occupying only 66K. There is no way to access these files without Photoflash. Once decompressed, they can be saved in a format which your Atari software can use. This is more or less the way I process these images. A program like Das Repro runs 3 or 4 times faster than Photoflash.

The Accessory which accompanies the Apple allows the downloading of 32 images in about 30 seconds. You can also erase the camera from within this accessory. There's really not much to say about it except for some warnings. The Apple operating system uses something called 'extensions' where the Atari OS uses Auto programs. There are a surprising number of extensions needed by the Quicktake camera. Since I'm always trying to maximize memory I disable as many extensions as possible. It turns out some obscure extensions are needed for the Quicktake Accessory to work. For quite a while I was reinstalling the software because I couldn't get the camera to operate. Naturally I blamed my hard drive instead of my miserly disabling of extensions. This is pretty typical of any Mac software. The Apple OS assumes you're a moron: 'Don't Touch Anything', should be an appropriate warning. The less the user knows the better! You can only appreciate the Atari OS after becoming familiar with the Mac routines. This is one of the reasons why Atari software runs so incredibly fast on the same computer once MagiCMac takes over the hardware.

All in all I am much happier with my investment in a digital camera than I expected to be. It's a highly versatile, professional, tool for acquiring images where extremely high quality is not necessary. It should be noted that if I had to choose between a flatbed scanner and a digital camera, my choice would be the scanner. The scanner aside from being able to scan photographs can also acquire line art, text and other data which no digital camera can give me access to. But I already have a scanner and this camera gives me much greater flexibility at a much lower cost than some conventional photography.

For more information on the changing digital camera world you can contact Future Image Inc., which publishes the magazine Digital Camera Monitor. They update their information 10 times a year and can even give you pre-release information on new products. Contact them at: Future Image Inc., Burlingame CA 94010 Phone: (415) 579-0493 Fax: (415) 579-0566 E-Mail: agfuture@aol.com

Power Mac Atari emulator is not very solid and crashes frequently. No doubt this situation will be rectified by the incredible team of developers.
Next issue will keep people informed about this latest upgrade to MagiCMac and related developments. However the article will primarily discuss information about the various Atari image processing tools which are available now. One last point I wish to make this month, is a brief discussion about the overuse of the word 'professional', and the expression 'professional tools'.
As a fully qualified professional, and in this case my profession has absolutely nothing to do with computers, I can look with supreme disdain over the ongoing definition of some tools being professional and others being amateur. I hold the highest available license that my trade offers. If someone wants to put up a gasoline cracking plant, it requires the signature of an architect, an engineer and me. I live and die by the expression: 'The right tool for the job'. If I whip out my 4" crescent wrench, is it an amateur tool compared to my 4' compound wrench? If a tool is created according to high standards of design and manufacture it is a professional tool. In fact even if the tool is garbage, the only reality that matters is that, "I am a professional, and any tool that I use, will be used professionally."
In other words as I seek to learn and master the fields of Desktop Publishing and Image processing, I need tools to create and output my creations. My camera, my scanner, my computer and anything else I use has to be capable of completing the jobs I undertake, according to the standards I wish to maintain or achieve. For real estate brochures, advertising flyers and quite a few other tasks, my image acquisition hardware is more than adequate and anything better would be overkill. A 20 meg file intended for a real estate brochure of 1" images would create three times as much work as the images from my Apple Quicktake. If I seek to undertake more sophisticated tasks, my digital acquisition equipment will have to be upgraded. Indeed my Atari TT computer is a much more powerful tool than I need. But both my computer and software are flexible enough to handle any job. I say all this, so that anyone hearing that some piece of hardware is not a 'professional tool', will be able to identify the individual making the statement as someone who hasn't the faintest idea of what true mastery of a profession is all about. I hope this diatribe settles the point. Until next issue . . . ▲

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Potechin ON Publishing

nathan potechin

Nathan sucks up enormous amounts of RAM during the course of creating some really effective advertising!

FUN AND WORK . . .

I left for Comdex on Sunday, November 12, the 8th or 9th straight Comdex that I have attended. For those of you that have never experienced the plastic reality of Las Vegas, it can be quite exciting. I've probably been to Las Vegas 5 or 6 dozen times over the last 10 years however, and the excitement is gone. I am not impressed by the blatantly materialistic, ostentatious displays (ad nauseam), that permeate the very fabric of Las Vegas society and culture. That said, there is no place like Las Vegas! It's a town you should probably visit, at least one time.

The elaborate backdrops and costumes cannot be rivaled anywhere else. I can't think of another place where million dollar set designs for stage shows, is the norm. The downside for those of us blessed to visit regularly, is that the shows never change. For about 10 years the same shows have been headlined at most major hotels. As an added bonus during major trade shows like Comdex where the attendance is now arguably approaching 200,000, there is no need to have any headliners at all. All the shows will be packed whatever the quality, content or headliner.

For those of you not familiar with the word 'Comdex', it is the largest computer trade show held in North America. Fall Comdex is traditionally held in Las Vegas. Spring Comdex has been hosted by both Chicago and Atlanta, trading it back and forth for a number of years. The Las Vegas event is by far the largest.

This year we will be exhibiting Calamus in the Motorola/Apple/IBM Power PC Pavilion. Motorola has invited us to staff one of their workstations, a 100 MHz RISC-based Power PC, running Windows NT. They have also arranged to have both a Tektronic Phaser 340 colour printer and a 5' Canon digital photocopier/ printer hooked up to our workstation. Calamus will output to both using the standard Windows NT driver in the one case and a custom written 3rd party driver for the Canon copier in the other. We'll also install and display Photoworks on the same workstation showing both to all and sundry.

Mario Georgiou and J.P. Roberts will be staffing the exhibit. I will be here and there as usual, checking out the competition, the new technology and anything else that might be of interest. We already have presentations scheduled with some of the major magazines and I am anticipating a very interesting show for us. Although our display is on the PPC, and therefore the NT version of Calamus, I also plan to take along an AST Ascensia P90 Notebook running Windows 95, so that I can show that version of Calamus should the occasion present itself.

Most Calamus users should be familiar with Mario. For those who are unfamiliar with J.P. Roberts, he is a retired air force pilot with an impressive amount of experience. J.P. has been helping us at Comdex for many years. He uses Calamus on his Mega4 ST and continues to produce professional results for his desktop publishing business. Every now and then J.P. picks up some

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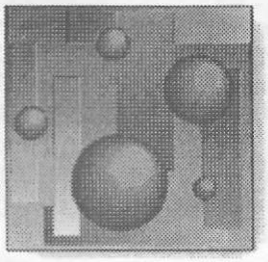
Blends

Masking

Illustration

Photo Retouching

Text Editor

Color Separation

business for himself through the contacts he makes at the show, as he actually lives in Las Vegas year 'round. Anyone else that might be interested in lending us a hand when we happen to be exhibiting in your home town, please let us know. The pay is lousy but the company is great!

WORK AND FUN . . .

Last week we took over a job previously done by another firm. The firm had used Quark Xpress, Photoshop and Illustrator on a Mac. The job was an interesting and informative experience for us. First of all we learned that it is a real pain to transfer files from the Mac versions of those programs to their PC counterparts. Days after starting, Mario was still trying to connect the dots. I imagine that eventually we'll get it right. After watching a few people work with Quark the last couple of weeks, I am really glad I have Calamus.

A PR agency designed the box layout and did the creative work on it. When it was time to have a look, naturally we asked that some things be changed slightly: move that there, lower that here, change the font, lighten the graphic, change the graphic, go back to this font, no, that's still not right, try another font, etc.. This went on for a solid week. A color proof was made to take a look at the way all the colors worked together. A die line was created that determined the

SIDE BAR Nathan refers repeatedly to something called 'Trapping'. It's an important term these days, because it addresses a problem inherent in mechanical reproduction. Remember that no matter how your work is output (bubblejet, laser, web offset), the final accurate, handling of color (how the ink gets on to the page), is determined in very large part by the mechanical accuracy of printer.

If you examine the process by which images, text, separations and spot colors are actually printed, you'll see very quickly that each successive layer of color fills in holes and gaps left by the last layer. If each layer is not lined up perfectly (or if too much 'play' exists in a transverse print head, then successive layers will not be laid down precisely. That usually results in a layer being shifted slightly, leaving gaps showing white on one side (where the paper shows through), and dark bands (where one color layer sits on another), on the other side. A document that looks great on-screen and poor on paper, will often reveal Trapping problems. If a document of yours looks poorer than it should, examine it with a plain magnifying glass; you will likely find evidence of poor Trapping, with color layers shifted slightly to one side, shadows shifted up or down, leaving a general impression that the document is slightly out of focus.

Trapping refers to different techniques that compensate for mechanical inaccuracies. There are 5 primary kinds of Trapping: Spreading, Choking, Transitional Blending, General Blending, and Antialiasing.

1 – SPREADING: If for example, your document contains a red circle that must be printed in a blue circle, the color separation will give you a blue circle with a hole in it, and a solid red disk. Poor trapping will result in the red being shifted slightly, leaving a gap at some point. That's ugly. o SPREADING, is simply the simple technique whereby the size of the red disk is minutely enlarged to compensate for a mechanical shift by the printing equipment. If you're

exact final layout and incorporated right into the design. A dialux was made to get an overall impression of the developing end result. Then it was time to output to film.

"Trapping? Nope. That's assigned by the service bureau. We don't do that here," I was told (surprisingly), as if I should have known better.

Off it went for film, 140 megabytes of data. Traps were assigned and film generated. Late one night last week, at my home, a courier delivered a large flat cardboard package containing the film and a Fuji color match print. Five minutes on my living room coffee table I had already found a half a dozen errors, none of which had existed the last time I saw a proof of the design. For those still following this story, the print was 33" x 46", far exceeding the maximum size of my 72 pica Ultre Setter. The output was done on a $250,000 Linotype image setter.

At work early the next day I laid the Fuji print on a table under the light and made a character by character examination of the entire box design. Before I was done I had managed to locate a full page of errors. That meant the job could not go to the printer that morning, as had been planned. The printer was not pleased. This kind of job is booked into a time slot and we didn't make it. Back it went to the PR agency. By the end of the day they had redone all the changes and once again sent the files out to their local service bureau for output. The waiting continued. Finally, close to 11:00 PM that night a familiar package arrived at my door. This time I couldn't spot any mistakes, and it looked like we could now move forward.

The next morning the film went to the printer. They immediately started stripping it and preparing it to create plates. When the plates were done, the 5 color Heidelberg press was set up for the job and Saturday morning staff was brought in specially to run it. However, I had requested a press check. That meant after they had run off a few hundred sheets of this cardboard material I would then have to sign off on the job before they could proceed. Saturday morning off I went in my car down Hwy.401 to the printer. Approximately 10 seconds after my first glance at the proof waiting for my signature, I discovered the first major error; a few seconds later, the second. The first was caused by poor trapping, something we could not see in the color proof but was evident on the cardboard. In one area the film house had failed to properly create a trap over the C in the Calamus title. It seemed they had simply placed another graphic on top of the C rather than trapping the C. The result was visually and immediately apparent. The second error was caused during the creation of the Cyan plate. A heat spot had developed which appeared smack dab in the middle of the forehead of an image we had used.

The film had to be corrected and plates remade. Unless I want to increase the costs of the job by an order of magnitude, I would have to wait until Monday to continue. In response to a question from the Foreman asking when they could expect new film from the service bureau, I asked if they could do it in-house.

"No problem," he replied.

Monday before noon the film had been redone, plates remade and the job started running again. I went to the printer for another press check, and was pleased to see that everything passed muster; it's good that I know a thing or two about printing and publishing. I also know enough to realize there's no guarantee I found all the errors. I

compensating digitally (using Calamus), the problem is easily solved: just increase the size of the frame by a 'mil' or two. If you're compensating mechanically, the film being shot for the red plate has to be slightly overexposed, thereby expanding the final image.

2 - CHOKING: Using the example above, CHOKING is the process whereby the hole in the blue is reduced. Digitally, this is accomplished by reducing the diameter. Mechanically, it's accomplished by underexposing the blue, which tends to shrink inner dimensions.

In these examples, it's important to use ink that has good opacity, and good quality paper. Opacity refers to the density of pigment (or coloration) in the ink. The higher the opacity, the less likely it is that bottom colors will show through. The better the paper, the less likely it is that ink will bleed or run. As well, better quality paper has higher opacity too.

3 - TRANSITIONAL BLENDING: Using the example above, a Tertiary color can be used rather than enlarging or reducing the size of any object. A band of color between the red and blue (a combination of red and blue in other words), is laid down to compensate for any mechanical inconsistencies. The extra band of color (usually no more than a few thousandths of an inch wide) can serve to cover certain flaws. This is a technique generally reserved for professionals.

4 - GENERAL BLENDING: This technique is usually employed by the pros, when trying to compensate for problems with color separations. It requires the use of a blend of colors from the area near the poorly trapped section.

5 - ANTI-ALIASING: This technique is often used when laying down black text on a combination of white and color backgrounds. Digitally, pixels near the edges of the text are dispersed in a very even manner, resulting in a perfectly even transition from black to white, or from the black text to color. This technique does not work well at low resolutions (anything below about 1200 dpi). At 1200 dpi and higher, it has the effect of achieving extremely sharp focus; the eye is fooled because the transition from black to white is so perfectly even. However, the combination of Anti-aliasing and a very fine screen (3% raster, 80 lines per inch), can result in a remarkable, 3 dimensional effect, which has become very popular in television and magazine advertising these days.

None of these techniques have traditionaly been of any concern to home based desktop publishers. But as we move into the realm of low-cost, 600 dpi (and higher!) laser printers, and high resolution color inkjet printers, it is becoming a good idea to learn some tricks of the trade!

sure tried my best though. The box got a UV coating the next night and when it dried completely, was die cut and made into the final box. When you see it on the shelf at your local dealer, please tell me your opinion of it.

As always I will consider your response to this article when formulating the next. Contact Current Notes or myself directly. Contact me on-line at POTECHIN or DMCPUBLISH on Genie, 76004,2246 on CompuServe, DMCPUBLISH on Delphi or POTECHIN@GENIE.COM through the Internet. ▲

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Current Notes REVIEW

good news/bad news good news/bad news good news/bad news

We let Razor loose on Geneva, and we didn't even tell Dan Wilga! Poor Dan (you might be thinking)? No, not really! Razor is a nasty character we usually keep leashed ; he tends to fix his target and shoot from the hip. But this time, he *asked* to review Geneva . . . so we figured Wilga was safe. We were right . . .

I don't like this - I don't like this at all. Why do I have to do this? WHY do I hafta multitask? If my phone rings while I'm typin' something, it takes me half an hour just to remember where I left off! Switchin' back and forth between programs just doesn't seem like the best thing for 'ol Jack. But I've given it the old college try, and you know what? It ain't so bad after all; even for someone as 'singletask' as me . . .

Jack Reikel finally gets sucked into the multitasking vortex....

INTRO

What I'm doing right now though, is typical of what effective multitasking is all about (ignore the previous complaint, if you don't mind!). I just switched out of STalker, and back into the Everest text editor (to continue writing this review). I didn't have to quit STalker, then launch Everest; they're both sitting there, taking up their own little areas of RAM. I've got Kobold hanging around (as an open, running accessory), and Calamus SL sucking up about 7 meg worth of RAM, as well. Not bad, huh? The way I figure it, I save about fifteen minutes every day, just because I don't need to launch, re-launch, re-re-launch, and re-re-re-launch any of these programs anymore. They're always there, coming instantly to life as I cycle through the windows belonging to each of them. This rendition of Geneva is a terrific improvement over the original, and *that's* the reason I'm so enthusiastic about it. While the original Geneva versions were much more useful and compatible than the Mint/MultiTOS combo, they still lacked that deeply solid 'feel' that I need, in order to settle down comfortably with any particular piece of software; particularly operating system software. Mint/MultiTOS didn't feel solid either. As a matter of fact Mint/MultiTOS still doesn't feel like much of anything at all, except a slow, incompatible, RAM-sucking pig, which requires a lot of fiddling and a lot of extensions (and a lot of work!), to run properly. No matter how well (or how poorly) Geneva fits your work habits, you're going to agree (after reading this review), that Geneva is now about as solid as anything out there. And I ain't damning this baby with faint praise either; Geneva is good. It's real good.

This isn't a technical review. I'm no Einstein. I am a small-business owner though, I write for fun (and try to do my best), maintain family finances, use a commercial internet provider, and accomplish it all with a computer running TOS/GEM (and now!), Geneva. This review has been done with a special copy of Geneva, sent to Current Notes by Gribnif Software, the manufacturer of Geneva and other fine products. I'm gonna be sorry to give the copy back. As a matter of fact, I've already sent an order for my own copy directly to Gribnif.

This review does reflect my personal work habits, however. Check out what I do, compare it to what you do, and see if Geneva doesn't fit well into your own workday (or playday, or make-work day, etc.

What follows is a quick overview of Geneva. After that you'll find the diary I kept of my Geneva use, one day. The diary (if it does nothing else), will give you an idea of Geneva's practical applications and general stability.

OVERVIEW

Geneva is not a complete replacement Operating System for TOS/GEM computers. What Geneva *does* replace (primarily) is something called the AES

Jack 'Razor' Reikel, is a pen-name. You'll have to guess who he/she really is. The test bed for Jack's review was quite extensive. He used a Falcon030 with 14 meg of RAM, Screenblaster 1 (which didn't work with this iteration of Geneva), a SVGA monitor, a USRobotics 14.4 modem, Canon BJC-600 color printer, a Beetle mouse, and the following patches and tsr's. (Auto Folder): BLIT__ON, CACHE12, DATARESC, EXTENDOS, FASTPATH, FPATCH2, GENEVA, FREDWEST, JAR40, JPEGD, NVDI, SILKMOUS, TOS4TRAP, TRAKMENU & XBOOT. (ACC's): EDITPLUS, FLEXMENU, IMAGECOPY4, MAXIFILE III, TASKMANAGER, XCONTROL.

(which stands for Application Environment Services). Because it replaces the AES (which normally takes care of what we refer to as Desktop Functions), Geneva generally needs some sort of replacement desktop and/or program launching software. The AES itself is the part of your TOS/GEM operating system that controls Menus, Dialog Boxes and Windows; all those things which are needed and used by GEM type programs. The AES gives the same sort of 'look' and 'feel' to all of the software you use. But the AES needs a couple of other things: a disk operating system (which is known as GEMDOS, on TOS/GEM computers), and something called a Shell, where desktop operations such as file management and program launching can be executed.

When you boot up after installing Geneva, what you'll get is a big disappointment(!?). The screen is Atari green, and there is nothing on it except for a Menu Bar. It contains only three entries: Geneva, File, and Options. A shell (or rather, a replacement desktop of some sort), seems to be a necessity. There are a few great options where shells are concerned. First and foremost is Gribnif's own NeoDesk4. Second (and less well-known because it's quite new), is a little item called FlexMenu. It's a small, brilliant, versatile Accessory shell/program launcher. by Keith Gerdes of Trace Technologies. Third, is a little item called GenevaRun by Yanick Dufresne (it's shareware and the demo version is bundled with Geneva). There are others. Some are reportedly superb. Now I haven't tried them, so I can't report on any personal experience, but everything from TeraDesk and Thing (freeware), to Ease (commercial), and no|Desk (shareware), have been tried with varying degrees of success. I've used FlexMenu and NeoDesk4 extensively and they both work beautifully. Try the others yourself.

Whatever you boot up with, one of the other things you'll notice immediately about Geneva, is its marvelous File Selector. It's a program launcher/file management system all by itself. While it doesn't have any provision for reading text files (you need some sort of external program for that, if you're running Geneva without a shell; any decent text editor will do), the file selector is still a marvel of programming. It is rivaled only by such things as BoxKite, Freedom, Selectric & Universal Item Selector III. The whole point is that you can copy, move, delete, touch, create folders, and launch programs, all from the file selector (the Sept/Oct issue of Current Notes has a terrific review of all the major replacement file selectors). If you toss in the power of the commands you can use in the GEM.CNF file, it's debatable whether you really need a desktop of any kind. But operating without a desktop is a little extreme in this day and age of graphical environments. Besides environments such as NeoDesk, FlexMenu and GenevaRun use very little extra RAM (FlexMenu uses the least). GenevaRun is a small semi-graphical program launcher by Yanick Dufresne, a Canadian programmer and one of Gribnif's beta-testers. It's not as powerful as FlexMenu (few things are!), but it works extremely well, it's inexpensive shareware, and it may even be as much (or more) than you need.

A shell (or rather, a replacement desktop of some sort), is a definite necessity. There are a couple of great options where shells are concerned. First and foremost is Gribnif's own NeoDesk4. Second (and less well-known because it's quite new), is a little item called FlexMenu.

The GEM.CNF file is an ASCII file which can be loaded and changed or modified in any decent ASCII text editor. There are lots of good text editors out there: Gribnif's own STeno, EditPlus by Clear Thinking Software, Edith Professional from ABC Solutions, and quite a few great shareware offerings such as Everest, 7Up, Alice, and even Anthony Watson's unusual PenPal. STeno, EditPlus and Edith Professional have the added advantage of being able to run as desk accessories or regular programs.

The GEM.CNF file is a series of statements about how Geneva should treat and recognize certain kinds of file extensions, environments and programs/shells which you want to autorun or make use of as soon as you boot up. The Geneva manual is very clear on what to edit, what not to edit and what each line means. In point of fact Geneva, like most other professional pieces of coding, is set up with defaults that will accommodate most user needs. As the manual suggests: familiarize yourself with Geneva in its default mode. Customize it when you become more familiar with it. It's good advice. I followed it and wound up with an experience well worth telling you about. In any case, the GEM.CNF file provides the opportunity to run programs automatically, run a shell/launcher and more, automatically, every time you crank up Geneva. Always make a backup copy of the GEM.CNF file, once you've gotten everything going.

The GENEVA.CNF file is an awful lot like the DESKTOP/NEWDESK.INF files we're all familiar with. It contains information about how each program you use has been set up for multitasking (or singletasking), desktop/window colors, system font(s) and much, much more. Always make a backup copy of the GENEVA.CNF file and keep it with your backup copy of GEM.CNF. Keep both backup CNF files current because I experienced a minor problem with Geneva while saving new program Flag settings: with several applications asleep (because Calamus SL was running in singletasking mode), saving the current settings in the Task Manager resulted in a trashed GENEVA.CNF file. Because I followed the advice in the manual regarding backup copies of the CNF files, I saved a lot of time (I didn't have to do all the program flags, gadget settings, color settings, etc., all over again)!

One of the best additions you can make to your setup is a little something called FastPath. It's an auto folder program that pops-up & provides you with the option to select from dozens of different stored paths, paths/files, & extensions (for masking), every time you call the file selector (any file selector). It's another brilliant, shareware timesaver from Keith Gerdes & Trace Technologies. You can even call MaxiFile directly from FastPath. It's a 'must-have' enhancement if you're using Geneva.

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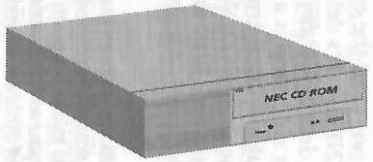

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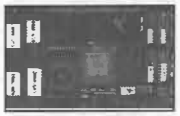

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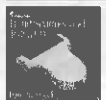

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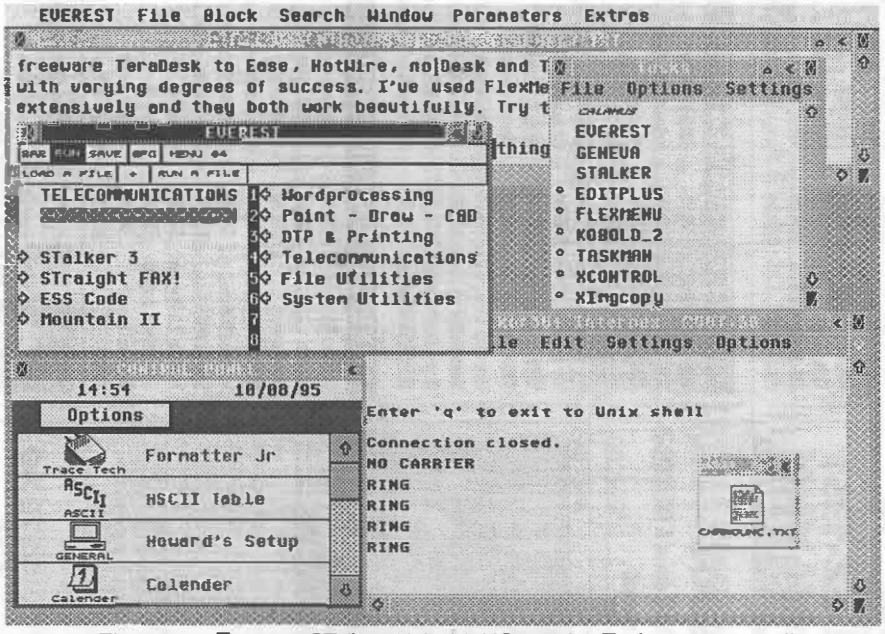
NEW 95

Read the Geneva manual. Read it from page one, right up to (but not including!), the section on programming. Read it thoroughly. Dan Wilga & Al Fasoldt have done a good job writing the thing. Their descriptions are accurate, clearly written, and provide a thorough understanding of Geneva and multitasking in general. The most important definition to make note of is the difference between the two principle types of multitasking: Co-operative Multitasking (Geneva), and Pre-emptive Multitasking (Mint). This latest version of Geneva is compatible with Mint, so that Geneva can now provide access to your CPU in either multitasking mode. Just remember that if you find a use for the Mint/Geneva combo, things will s-l-o-w down considerably. As it is, running Geneva in its traditional co-operative mode, will not slow your system to any significant degree. On the Falcon test bed, performance was typically quick, efficient and comfortable. There was a marginal slowdown, but I couldn't find a way to measure it. The bottom line where speed is concerned is that I have saved time overall, during any average day using my system. At the end of the day, I've know I've gotten more done, with less stress. Geneva is not a replacement operating system (see above), but is smart enough to make you think you've got a new, improved operating system!

Once you change the only line in GEM.CNF you really have to bother with at first (shell=?), you'll find that the heart and soul of Geneva revolve around the Task Manager accessory. The two most important features of the task manager are the Flags settings and the Miscellaneous settings. As suggested above, the flag settings (found under the task manager's 'File' menu), allow you to customize individual programs for multitasking or singletasking operation, force older programs to co-operate with each other (and force older programs to co-operate with newer software), make a variety of AES settings and then save all of the settings to the GENEVA.CNF file. The Miscellaneous settings (found under the task manager's 'Options' menu), provide some extremely important choices as far as the operating feel of Geneva is concerned. For my own purposes the 'Preserve System Colors' options, was actually the difference between using Geneva constantly, and throwing it in the trash! Because I use Calamus SL a *lot*, it was imperative for me to find a way to make sure Calamus didn't screw up the system colors (as it usually does on a Falcon: accessories appear in the wrong colors with buttons that are blacked out, menu items blacked out and worse). The 'Preserve System Colors' option eliminated the problem completely. Brilliant! It has become possible for me to go back to the default system colors (which I had reset to compensate for Calamus' unfortunate tendency, and which didn't suit all software), and use Geneva almost exclusively.



FlexMenu, Everest, STalker, Kobold, XControl & Task Manager - all at the same time!

For those who like things compartmentalized, Geneva's features can be divied up into three categories: 'Gee Whiz', 'Ah-Hah!', and 'Hmmm'. In all fairness the 'Hmmm' category is the smallest, and that's to Wilga's credit. The 'Hmmm' category includes the option to make dialog buttons appear with rounded corners, and the option to use Speedo fonts for display. What's wrong with those optons you ask? Well, rounded corners are usually ugly on our pixelated screens (even in VGA resolutions), and Speedo fonts slow the system down to the point where it's frustrating to use. As I've just said however, the 'Hmmm' category is small and it does not detract from Geneva in any way.

The 'Ah-Hah' category includes such things as the 'Preserve Mouse On/Off' selection in the 'Miscellaneous' options in task manager. All multitasking systems have the peculiar habit of not always displaying the mouse pointer. It seems to get lost in the translation, while switching between programs. Mint, MagiC, and Geneva all suffer from this little annoyance. But although my mouse has disappeared from time to time with this version of Geneva, I have always managed to get it back on-screen quickly, most often by simply pushing my mouse to the top of the screen and dropping a menu; Geneva detects the 'command', re-locates the mouse for its own purposes, and thereafter displays it properly. There are other valuable 'Ah-Hah' factors which you'll discover for yourself.

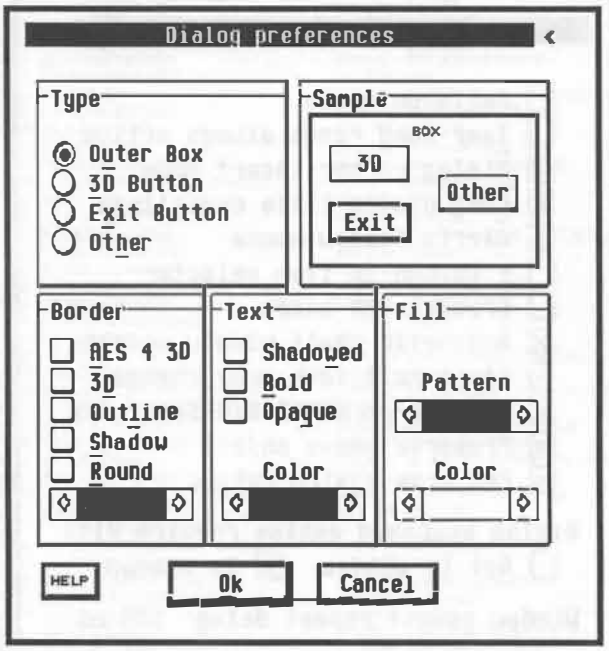
The 'Gee Whiz' category includes such things as 'Preserve System Colors' (see above), which are not only cosmetic, but actually create a situation where excellent (but situationaly unusable) software, suddenly becomes indispensible again! The category also features the contrast between Geneva's power and the small amount of RAM it requires for itself. The most basic 'Gee Whiz' where Geneva is concerned is still the fact that now (better than ever), you can have a couple of accessories, a couple of large programs, and a couple of handy utilities all hanging around at the same time. Switching between them is almost instantaneous. You never have to 'Save and Quit', close down an application, and start another. Atari/TOS/GEM users have always had limited multitasking available to them, via Desk Accessories, but Geneva gives TOS/GEM users with as little as 2.5 meg of RAM, the ability to run their ACC's as well as a couple of major applications. One of the other major 'Gee Whiz' factoprs is that because Geneva treats ACC's much the same as PRG's, there is no longer any 6 Accessory limit.

Before we get to my simple Geneva Diary,, a word about system resources is worthwhile. I've got a personal bone to pick with all those yokels who've owned Atari, IBM, Mac & Amiga computers

Singletasking isn't a heckuva lot different from multitasking. As a matter of fact, about the only way to effectively run certain programs under Geneva is by setting them for singletasking operation. They still snap to life as soon as you click on their names, but everything else is forced to go to sleep. That means background operations such as uploading and reformatting will be ruined, as soon as you activate a singletasking program. Never turn off Geneva's built-in warning dialog!

for years, and haven't bothered upgrading their Operating System (ROM chips *OR* software, depending on the platform), their RAM, their hard drives (or even bothered with a hard drive in the first place!). I'm tired of those same people bellyaching about how the new apps don't run on their machines properly (or at all). I'm tired of them whining to developers about how they really resent the fact that Geneva (for example) doesn't do 'squat', on a TOS 1.0, 520 ST, equipped with one floppy drive. You people have got a lot of bloody nerve. Spare me the howl about finances too; I'm as cheap as the next guy, but I darn well know when to stick a crowbar in my wallet and lever out enough cash to upgrade my system, in order to take advantage of the important new things that come along. Go ahead Sparky. Take the chance. I'm pretty sure, electricity's here to stay.

My recommendation for the minimum TOS/GEM system that will run effectively, productively and efficiently for most users is: 1040 STe, 4 meg RAM, LinkII SCSI cable/adaptor, 240 meg SCSI hard drive, mono & color monitors, 2nd (external) floppy drive. With this system (and better ones too, of course), major applications will be basically happy, Geneva will be happy, all of the newest programs and accessories will be happy (with all their fancy TOS calls), and you'll be running at a decent speed. You can also get by with less. But just remember that "less" is now nearly 10 years old, and getting harder and harder to support every day. TOAD Computers and Computer Direct have got C-Lab Falcons on sale right now actually. You might want to consider taking the 'big' plunge, and *really* upgrading to one of those suckers. They're very nice machines! There are also TT-clones out there which are put together close to home (specifically the Computer Direct, DirecTT machine).



'Hmmm'

THE DIARY

Tuesday Morning, 7:30am

I'm tired and I don't want to start work. But I meander into the office anyway. I'm don't turn the systems off overnight (I receive faxes via hardware and software). There's something waiting for me in STraight FAX. Launch OCR v1.4 and load in the 11 page FAX. Takes about an hour to turn the thing into a text file (versus 2 hours to re-type it). Dropped out of it once to Telnet (using STalker) over to England to check a couple of things in the document. Received a ZIP file in the process, but went back into OCR while the file was downloading.

Tuesday Morning, 9:00am

Drank coffee without spilling any into the Falcon (there's a first time for everything!). Calamus SL in singletasking mode runs just fine. I'm doing a cover page and body text layout for a report on school busing problems in Durham Region (just outside of Toronto). While I was 'creating' in Calamus the phone rang: a call from the person waiting for the report. He wants to see what I've got so far, and can I FAX it to him. I print the CDK to the STraight FAX Calamus driver, and bang it off to him. While it's transmitting (16 pages), I switch to Everest and make a couple changes to an upcoming 'Razor' column.

Tuesday Morning, 9:45am

Phone rings. It's Howard Carson asking how the Geneva review is coming! 'Fine', I tell him. When I get off the phone (man, we both spend *far* too much time on the phone), I immediately open a new file in Everest and begin typing up this Diary part of the review. Better to start it now, rather than trusting everything to memory. Can't trust my memory anymore.

Tuesday Morning, 10:15

My 'school bus' client calls with some suggestions and questions. I switch back to Calamus. Please DMC, *DO* something about PKS Write. It works and is integrated with Calamus, but it is still an aging piece of crap. The whole planet uses drop down text editor menus, and PKS should too! Open ImageCopy 4 and peer at some pictures & clipart. My client suggested the addition of some graphics. It takes 15 minutes of searching with ImageCopy 4, but I find two decent graphics and convert them to uncompressed, Greyscale TIFs. Switch back to Calamus, create the frames, and drop them in. Not bad.

Tuesday Morning, 11:00am

Early lunch. A friend drops by with some computer questions (a major hassle with OS/2 Warp Connect). I can't help him, because the problem sounds too bizarre to be true. The friend is also looking for a copy of WinZIP (he's got even more machines than me), so I switch over to STalker, logon to CRS Online and download the latest version (which I hear finally works properly). Friend leaves, happy. This guy owes me many floppy disks, and one day I *will* collect.

Tuesday Morning, 11:45am

Lunch is cold. Nice thing about working at home is that you have the microwave oven all to yourself. Unfortunately, re-heated lunch tastes like cardboard. I am now completely bored with Calamus, STalker and STraight FAX. Besides, I can't proceed with the school bus project until I get more data. Switch back to Everest, add a little to this diary, then open another file (I'm working on a book). Type, type, type, type, type.

Tuesday Afternoon, 1:30pm

While writing, graphic idea for school bus project floats

A little trick/tip: this is mentioned in the Geneva manual, but it's worth repeating. Single-task Calamus, and *don't* set any memory Flag. Use Calamus SL's own settings (in its System Parameters module), to assign a large chunk of ST and/or TT RAM (depending on your hardware setup). That RAM setting in Calamus, is the RAM that Calamus won't take for itself. It is owned by TOS/GEM (or Geneva!), and is used to run standard programs and accessoriess; everything that ain't Calamus SL, in other words.

through my brain. Load Outline Art 3 and do a neat, perspective, vector fill, to be placed underneath bitmap of school bus (it will look like there's a highway stretching off into the distance). Quit Outline Art (it doesn't do too well in a multitasking environment, even when it's been set for singletasking operation). Back to Everest.

Tuesday Afternoon, 2:30pm

Oh my god! I've been working for 7 hours and haven't once done a 'Save' (except for the Fax and the OL/CVG)! Panic ensues as I switch to each application and save everything in sight. What an idiot. I've been so relaxed switching back and forth, marvelling at Geneva, that I forgot the most important 'basic' of all. Save, save, save, save, save. Back into Calamus, import the CVG for the project. Looks good.

Tuesday Afternoon, 3:00pm

Time for an e-mail run. Switch to STalker and hit CRS Online, Eyenet, GEnie, Compuserve, Internex (my internet provider), RedHot BBS, and TAF Online. Get QWK packets almost everywhere. Do last logoff, and then load Mountain Reader 2 (MRII). Great program, that doesn't like some vector that Calamus like to grab. MRII will multitask sometimes; sometimes not. Co-operation this time! Cycle through about 300 messages, looking for my name. Carson calls again, bugging me about this Geneva review. I switch back to Everest, and bring the diary up to date. Good thing he called again!

Tuesday Afternoon, 4:30pm

Quit MRII. Screen goes all funny (there's no other way to describe it). Switching to Calamus and then back again back, clears things up. Back into STalker; only two REP packets to upload. Four minutes and I'm done. Second logon is interrupted by my voice mail however (I use a single phone line, and the dial tone is intermittent whenever there's a message waiting, which prevents telecom software from detecting a dial tone). Message is about data for the school bus investigation project. The message says data is waiting for me on Internex. I logon, grab a 1 meg, compressed text file(!). Logoff, launch ST ZIP and unpack the text file. Uncompressed, the file turns out to be 2.25 meg.

Tuesday Afternoon, 5:15pm

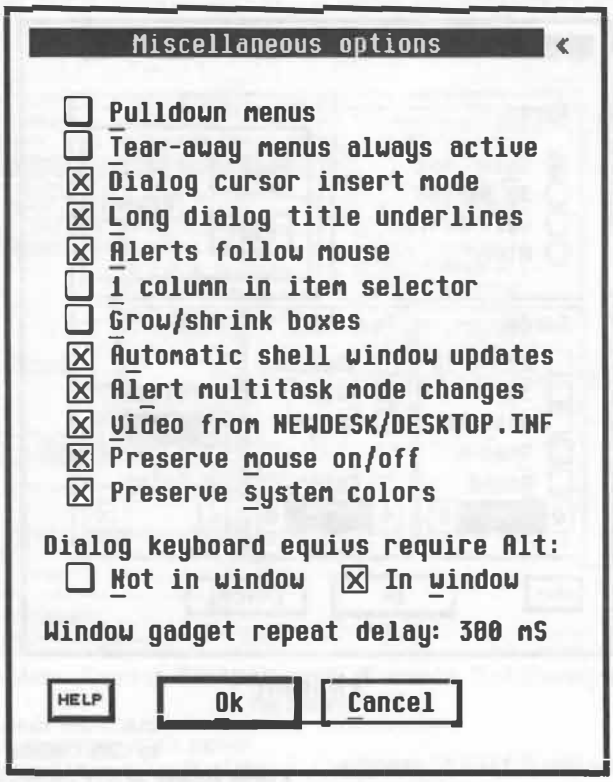
The 2.25 meg file goes nicely into Edith Professional (I had to shut down Everest, because I finally ran out of RAM; I like Edith better for large files, anyway). Unfortunately, the ASCII was converted from a WordPerfect or RTF or Microsoft Word file, and all the lines seem to be 110 characters long. Have to reformat entire document. Edith Professional will do it, but it'll take more than a few minutes! Reformatting process begins, and I go into Imagecopy 4 to look over some more graphics for the project.

Tuesday Afternoon, 5:45pm

Picture browsing has become boring, and I haven't seen anything I like. The re-formatting is done, and half the document appears to be reports and studies I already have. Total waste of time. Yet another brown-nosing civil servant, has supplied me with outright crap. I'm gettin' paid to help them, and all they can do is send me crap. Pathetic! Oh well, I'm starting to yawn anyway. I save the file, just in case. Pull up MaxiFile III, to do a little housekeeping; lots of files to put away, a few to delete.

Tuesday Afternoon, 6:10pm

Pull STraight FAX back up. It's still in Auto Answer. Oh, one last thing! Switch to Edith quickly, load and complete the day's Geneva diary. Not bad I'd say. Fast, efficient, no waiting around while programs repeatedly bootup. No waiting around while quitting programs, because I've only had to quit out of two programs all day! No crashes. No lockups. Not bad at all. Gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme.



'Ah-hah' & 'Gee Whiz'

GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS

Geneva got into a major argument with Screen Blaster. I have sent e-mail to Compo, asking if Screen Blaster II will work. I'm used to 768x576x16 colors and I must adapt to 640x480x16 while using Geneva. It'll work out though, I think. The SCROLLFIX system patch is not needed anymore. All older-release Geneva bugs have apparently been squashed. Falcon compatibility is very, very good. TT compatibility (according to at least half a dozen, reliable, critical sources), is even better. TOS 2.06 compatibility is superb. based on my experience with a Mega4 STe backup machine that I used when attempting to obtain some Geneva benchmark data.

A lot of people want to start multitasking. Some need it, some don't. 4 meg of RAM is the sensible minimum in any system, intended for use with Geneva; it doesn't use much RAM itself, but applications do! NeoDesk4 (which will be reviewed later), is also easy on RAM, and represents a genuinely superior desktop environment in which to work. Many people will be better served by using FlexMenu or GenevaRun. In any case, Geneva is inexpensive enough to be worth trying out even if you don't stick with it, and it even provides general system enhancements beyond multitasking, which anyone can use to good effect. Good stuff! ▲

Multitasking presents new problems. The idea of 'Quit'ting a program, has always been tied to the idea of 'Save & Quit'. But when you're multitasking, you rarely do a 'Quit'. Sometimes, that means forgetting to do a 'Save' periodically, tool Switching back and forth between multitasking apps, begins to feel (after a while), like you're moving around inside one giant Super-app. A save in an inactive program, is often remembered as a save in the program currently in use. Be careful! Do regular saves in each program.

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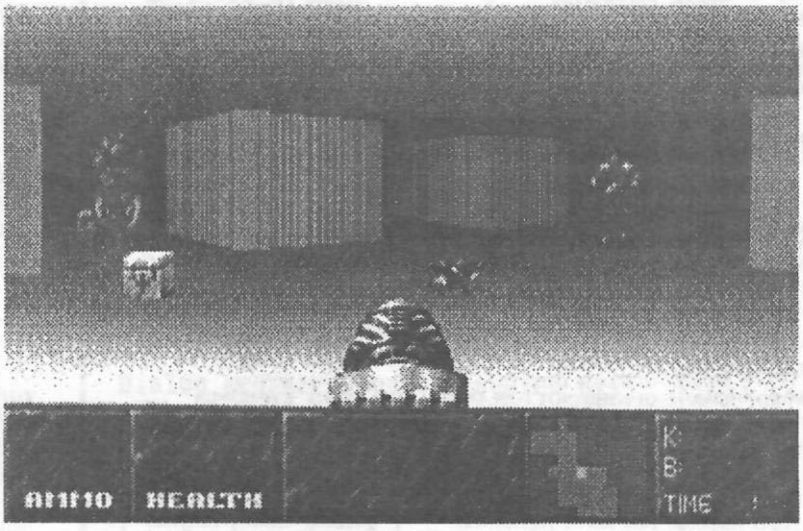
WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING

SUBSTATION

WARNING DANGER

Like many computer users, I am loyal to my favorite platform (Atari), and jealous of things available only on other platforms. First it was DTP envy, but Calamus SL came to the rescue. Then I wanted to play with pictures and video. Bingo! Apex Media to the rescue.

After looking over the shoulders of DOS users playing some really great Shoot-'em-up games (read: 'Doom'), I am happy to report that we have not been left in the dark. Fresh from Unique Development in Sweden, via



Look Out! These bad guys are BAD!

chro_MAGIC in Joplin Mo., comes . . . 'SUBSTATION'

You are Commander Scott, a MEM (Multi-Environment Marine) soldier on a mission to secure a Mitushi Industries Corporation Turbine SubStation, off the coast of Kobe Japan. Apparently no one knows just what has happened, but all contact has been lost. Transcripts from SubStation staff correspondence, lead members of the media to believe that something quite sinister is going on.

The truth of course is that the place has been taken over by all manner of alien baddies, and everyone on the station is dead. It is up to you to stop the place from self-destructing. Cool!

You start, with a little pep talk from your CO, a standard issue knife, and a single action hand gun with the appropriate ammunition. The object of the game is to traverse each level, picking up better firepower, more ammo, medical kits to heal your ever increasing wounds, and color coded keys which give access to secured areas of the station. Along the way you will meet all sorts of aliens including black spiders that move faster than any sprite should be allowed to. All these baddies are intent on keeping you from finishing your mission (they want you dead). Your only choice is to slaughter them.

Personally (possibly because I'm a girl and blood & gore is not on the list of things I want to see everyday), I could do without the left over blobs of guts and brain tissue after I make a kill. When some baddies are done with, the only thing left is their shoes. So I like to turn the extra graphics off before I start a game. This solves two problems: the one I have with left over carnage, and the one the game has with the extra tables and computers and plants and such, scattered around the rooms. If we were talking about 'DOOM', a game so filled with graphics that each level, each room, has a character all its own, I would not complain. But while the comparison is impossible to avoid, this is

not 'DOOM', and the sparse 'room fillers' add nothing to the feel of the game, and can really get in the way. The bitmapped extra graphics might take up little space on the screen, but the space they take up in the game is huge. You might need to walk virtual yards just to get around a plant. Heaven forbid you need to scramble around a box to avoid a shot from an alien, and forget about squeezing between a computer stand and the wall. This game needs you to be on your toes. You have to think fast, react fast, and run like hell. A reality I'm sure the programmers considered when they decided to make the additional graphics an option.

While the graphics may not be 'state of the art', the sound is. Using my standard issue computer speakers, the sounds of the station pumping, the moaning gunmen and screaming monsters are enough to make your skin crawl. Play the game with everything hooked up to a decent stereo system, and I doubt you will be able to meet up with a surprise meanie, and not physically jolt in your chair. Excellent!

As I've intimated, my demeanor favors the skill required to play, rather than the gore. You have to love puzzles and mazes, and if you don't already have a strategic mind, you will have to develop one in order to succeed in Substation.

Each stage of the game includes three Sublevels. Each level includes secured areas, and you must acquire the right color coded key in order to enter. Access to these levels is gained via the elevators, but not all elevators have entrances to all levels. Secret areas might hold extra ammunition or food necessary for your survival, but none are apparent on the map. You can only find them by instinct, and pushing nondescript walls in sometimes desperate hope that they will open. Baddies of all sizes will show up almost out of nowhere, and they move so fast that sometimes your only hope is to shoot fast, run backwards and hope that nobody is behind you. It can get really unnerving too. You can hear the creeps before you can see them, their crunching jaws getting closer and closer and just when you get them in your sights, something else is ripping at your back, deleting health points with every agonizing swipe. Some monsters are easy to kill, but your ammo doesn't last very long. They might stand still while you shoot, but their skin is thick and it takes a bit to finish them off. And finish them off you must! It might take two shots to kill a black spider (I hate those things), but a single hit only serves to piss them off. Wounded, they move just as fast and even more determined to get to you first.

After each level, or mission, is completed, you can pay a visit to the Armory and spend all of your hard earned credits on health points, additional ammunition or better firepower: a minigun, a grenade launcher or H2SO4 mines that will kill all manner of flesh if you can drop them close enough to your target, and still leave yourself with enough space and time to get out of the way. This is my favorite part 'cause I get to go shopping (Girl joke!).

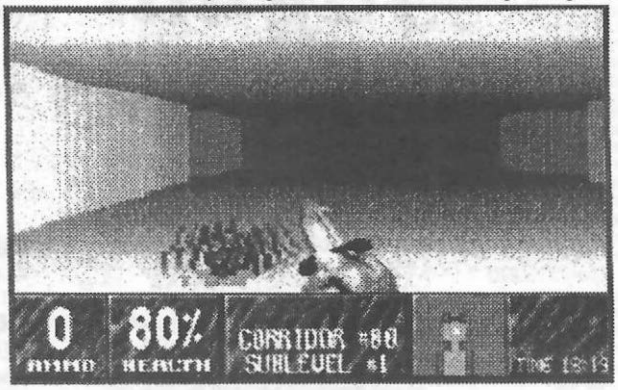
So game action is what makes SubStation fun. The look of the game is pretty dull. All the walls are the same color gray, and without the map, there is really no way to tell if the room you are in has been visited by you before. If you really want to compare it to 'DOOM', don't. If you really want 'DOOM' buy a Jaguar and play 'DOOM'. For lightning fast action and a good puzzle to solve, SubStation beats 'Doom' hands down. I've watched a ten year old friend of mine kill everything in 'DOOM' without getting a single scratch, all because he figured out the speed of the game. He gave up on SubStation: 'Too fast' he said. And if that is not enough, SubStation is also timed. Unlike 'DOOM' and a lot of other games out there, you don't have all day to solve a level. You have twenty minutes (that's real time) in each of the first three levels. Level four gives you twenty five minutes to get to your goal (gee thanks!). This you can't turn off, but it is configurable if you have a second player (via the MIDI ports).

I'm now on level four of SubStation, having a hell of a time with this ten foot silver ghoul. He won't fall with repeated blasts from the best weapon I have (an A1 Subgun using kevlar coated bullets). While I can get up to the door, I need to get through it to finish the level. It won't open for me. Once that big bag of alien testosterone finds me (which takes very little time at all), he blasts me repeatedly, showing no mercy. Before I get a chance to run, my eyes are bleeding and I'm dead. This is a big hint to anyone who has gotten past this filthy thing to e-mail me the solution.

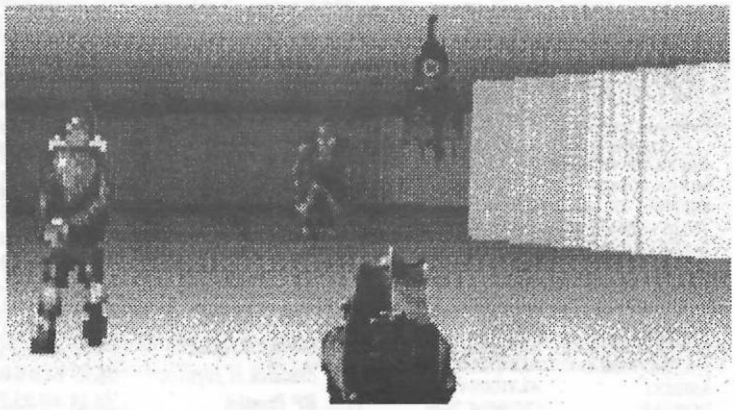
I've got SubStation loaded on my 4 meg, TOS 4.04 Falcon and a Jaguar Joy Pad solves the hassle of using the keyboard for moving around and firing at the baddies. A 1 meg STe will do just fine too, and will also provide the DMA sound necessary to reproduce the superb audio. Substation is fun, fast and furious. It may not be wonderfully pretty to look at, and I can guarantee your adrenaline will be pumping!

Reviewed by Lianne Reitter

SubStation is available from 'chro_MAGIC Software', 516 N. Jackson, Joplin MO 64801, USA (417) 623-7393, or your local Atari dealer. ▲



Things lurch & rush at you out of the darkness . . . the sounds really are terrific!



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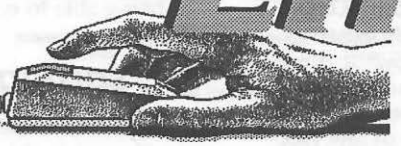


You already know you can use your modem to transfer data and communicate with others, but you can also use a modem to send and receive facsimiles of documents. To be able to do this, you need to have a special kind of modem: a FAX-capable modem. These days you will be hard pressed to find a modem that does not have FAX capability. In addition to a FAX modem, you also need software for your Atari that can properly communicate with the FAX modem.

Before we talk about the specifics of FAXing on the Atari, let's take a more general look at what a FAX really is.

Facsimiles were first conceived as a way to transmit copies of printed documents and photographs from one location to another. Unlike a telegraph which uses Morse Code to transmit individual letters in a message, early facsimile systems (first used in the 1920s to transmit photographs, weather maps, and other documents) used a photocell to 'scan' the source document. The facsimile machine would then encode each 'pixel' of the document into an analog sound signal: a low tone for a 'dark' pixel and a high tone for a 'light' pixel. This sound signal would then be transmitted over a dedicated telephone line to its destination, where it would then be decoded by another facsimile machine. This machine utilised an electric printhead (a stylus-like device through which current passed), to turn electrically sensitive paper dark where it should be dark and leave it light where it should be light. The result was a quite acceptable copy of the original document: a facsimile, in other words. These original fax systems were based on 'analog' technology. The photocell, communications line, and printhead all shared a single, continuously variable electric signal, and the whole works required no computing power. Today's standard fax systems still use a scanner, telephone line and printer, but they are digital rather than analog. Today's digital fax machines break a page up into a grid of 203 dots per inch horizontally by 98 (low-res) or 196 (high-res) dots per inch vertically. You can choose what resolution you need based on the level of detail in your document, whether it contains graphics, etc. The FAX machine's scanner digitizes the page one line at a time (the number of lines per page dependng on the vertical resolution you chose). Each pixel in the scan line is assigned a value of 1 if it's black or 0 if it's white. Then, the scan line is compressed using an RLE (run length encoding) compression algorithm. Each line is then transmitted over a modem and phone line to a modem in a remote fax machine, where it is decoded and printed one full scan line at a time, by a thermal printhead. This process continues until the page is complete, at which point more pages may be sent or the connection can be terminated. Really then, a modern digital fax machine consists of a scanner, modem and printer, not unlike its analog predecessor. The main difference is that digital FAX technology does require computing resources like RAM and a processor of some kind.

. . . enter computers

If a FAX machine is nothing more than a scanner, printer and a modem combined with a bit of computing ability, then why can't you use your computer setup (which may include all of these components), to achieve the same ends? Why not indeed! All you need to send

and receive FAXes with your Atari, is a FAX modem and some software which knows how to communicate with it. Because FAX software can be used to generate fax-compatible pictures from ASCII text, stored graphics, or DTP documents, the 'scanner' portion of the fax system is optional. Because you can use the FAX software to view received faxes right on your monitor, the 'printer' part of the system is optional as well! So your Atari and a fax modem can alone act as the heart of a completely functional fax system, with or without a scanner or printer! As for FAX software, the major commercially available package is STraight FAX! (available from TOAD Computers). There are some other programs available in the public domain, and the more general of the comments in this article certainly apply to those as well. However the purpose of any FAX software on any platform remains the same: to communicate with a fax modem and manage its transmission and reception of fax documents. To run STraight FAX!, you will need an ST with at least 2MB and preferably a hard disk (which makes storing your sent and received faxes easier and more reliable). It will work on a color or monochrome monitor on an ST, TT, or Falcon. Most important, you also need a FAX modem.

. . . how to choose a FAX modem

When you buy a faxmodem, you can choose between the Class 1, Class 2, and Class 2.0 fax standards. These standards govern how the computer communicates with the modem. Class 1 requires much of the fax encoding be done by your computer, while Class 2 modems have the resources to do this on their own. Class 2.0 modems finalize much of what can vary between manufacturers in Class 2 modems, but is distinctly different from the Class 2 standard. Right now, STraight FAX! is compatible with Class 1 and 2 FAX modems, and Class 2.0 support (specifically for the US Robotics v.34 Sportster) is forthcoming in a version 2.5 update. Right now, you will have the best luck with a FAX modem that supports both Class 1 and Class 2 standards. In a perfect world, it shouldn't matter what standard you choose, but because of the differences in the way they operate, having both standards in your modem gives you the greatest flexibility in being able to connect to remote fax devices.

. . . sorting out the v's

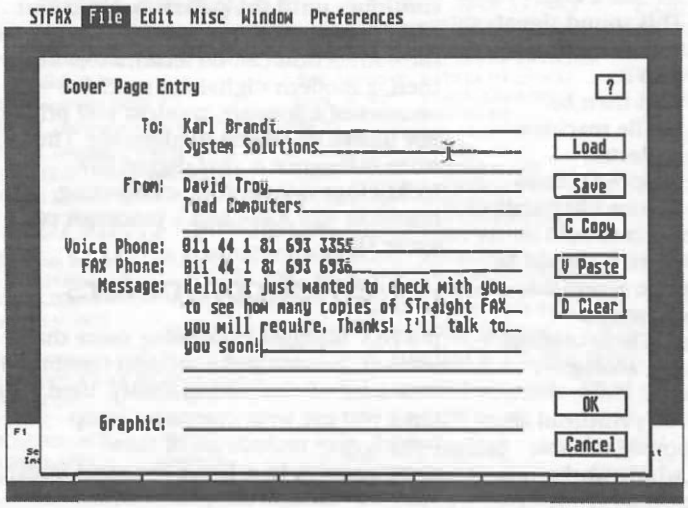
After you have decided on the Class issue, you'll want to think for a moment about speed. The v.17 standard for fax only defines fax speeds of up to 14,400 baud, and in fact almost all conventional fax machines operate at 9,600 baud. Today, of course, you can buy a 28,800 baud modem, but this speed is only good for data transmission. When it comes to fax, you are still limited by the 14,400 ceiling of the v.17 standard. Revised FAX standards (which should include color FAXes, binary file transmissions and more) are of course forthcoming, but until they are implemented worldwide, 14,400 is the speed limit on the fax highway. If you plan to use your modem primarily for fax rather than data, you may be just as well off with a 14,400 baud (or even 9,600 baud) modem, and you may save some money as well. Another tip: the SupraFAXmodem v.34 28,800 baud modems (as do some others) contain a Flash ROM, so when new FAX standards are introduced, you'll be able to upgrade your modem on the fly. This could save you having to replace your modem in a year's time.

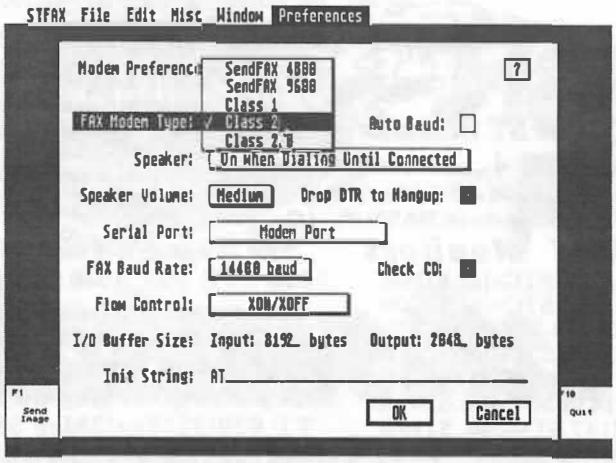
. . . sending a FAX

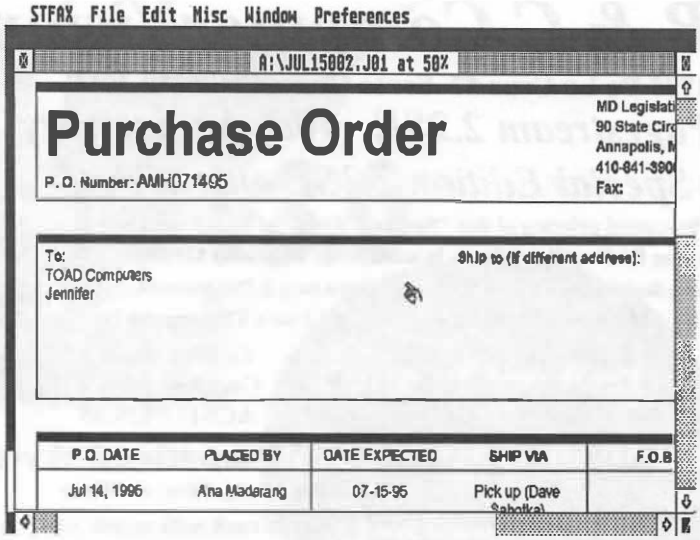
Once you have your modem and STraight FAX! in hand, you're ready to start sending faxes. After installing STraight FAX and plugging in your modem, go ahead and start the program. We'll begin by sending a simple fax cover page. Go to the 'File' menu and select 'Cover Page'. A simple dialog box will appear. The fields here will be placed on your cover page. Type in your name, your return FAX number, and your recipient's name. You may also enter up to six lines of text in the "Message" field. When you have completed the form, click on the "OK" button. You will then be prompted to choose a telephone number to dial, either from your dialing directory or entered manually. After you have selected a number to dial, STraight FAX! will create your cover page, which is actually a bitmap image stored in the RLE format used by conventional fax machines. After this conversion is complete, STraight FAX! will dial your destination. When the remote fax or faxmodem answers, the two modems will negotiate for the fastest possible speed, exchange a few parameters (like the resolution and size of the image), and then begin the transmission. After your cover page has been sent, the modem will hang up and STraight FAX will make a little "victory" noise to indicate the transmission was successful. It's that simple.

. . . creating FAXable images

One of the most important concepts to remember is that FAXes, when they are finally sent, are nothing more than black and white bitmap images. Other bitmap image formats like IMG and TIFF can







easily be converted to the FAX bitmap format using STraight FAX. Similarly, FAX format images can easily be converted into IMG and TIFF formats, and they can also be viewed or printed from within STraight FAX! To prove this, take a look at the COVERPAG.J01 (STraight FAX! fax format files are called .J01, .J02, .J03, etc.) file created by our coverpage fax transmission. You can see that STraight FAX converted your ASCII text into graphics using a standard Courier font included with the program. This font is also used to create fax files from standard ASCII text documents. In fact you can use STraight FAX by itself to send IMG, PCX, Degas, 1st Word and standard ASCII text files. But what if you want to send documents created by PageStream or Calamus? STraight FAX! cannot read DOC or CDK files natively, but the package does include printer drivers for both PageStream and Calamus that create FAX files. If you install the STraight FAX printer drivers into PageStream or Calamus, printing to these drivers will create FAX format bitmap pictures of your pages. These files can then be loaded by STraight FAX and FAXed directly.

. . . advantages to computer–based FAX

Using your computer to send FAXes can improve their quality immensely. When you use a conventional FAX machine, you are relying on the low quality scanner in the fax machine to accurately digitize your page. If you create your image on the computer, the streaks, dropouts, and skewing that might occur with the FAX machine are eliminated. Similarly, using your computer to receive FAXes (which can be done automatically or manually with STraight FAX) also produces superior results. When a FAX is received on a conventional FAX machine, it is imaged onto the flimsy thermal FAX paper we all know and love. If received on your Atari, it can be printed, archived, and even converted into IMG format for inclusion in DTP projects. This is a great way to keep a permanent record of FAX correspondence. And remember, there is no mystery about FAX standards or the way they operate. FAXes are nothing more than just another kind of bitmap graphic, and all you need is a FAX modem and FAX software to send FAXes to millions of destinations all over the world. Happy FAXing!

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Flash II v3.0

Flash II v3.0

Missionware Has A Winner!

Eric March looks at one of the best telecommunication packages ever!

Review: Flash II v3.0
By: Eric March

My editor called me a couple of months ago and told me that he wanted a review of Flash II.

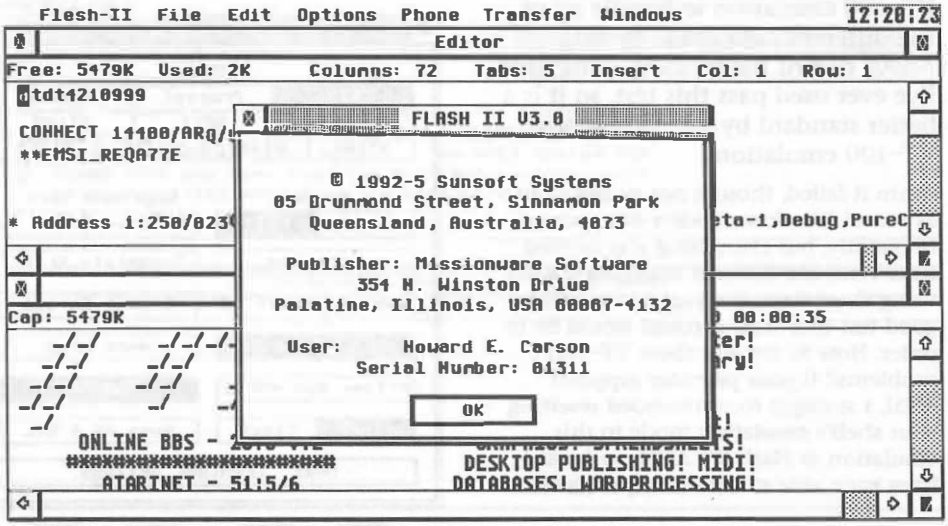
"Great," I thought, "another terminal program."

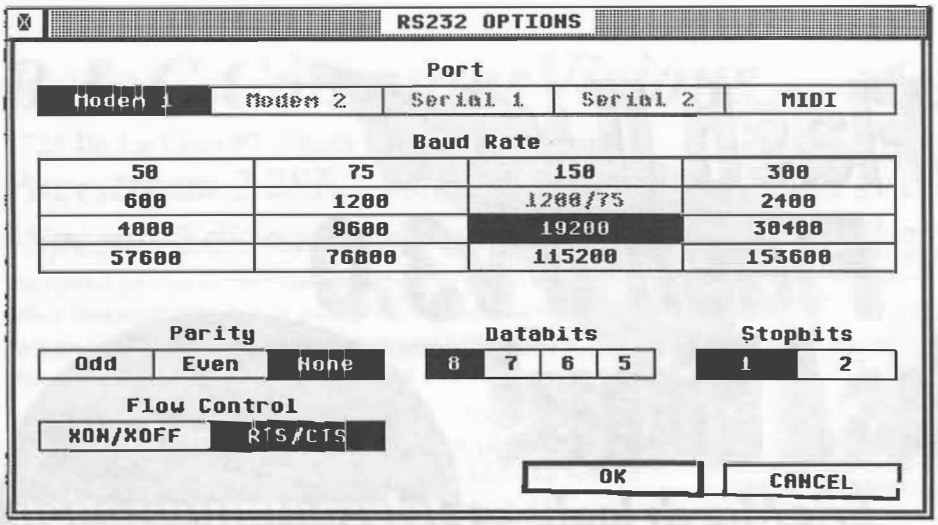
During the years I've had my ST, I've gone through quite a number of terminal programs, all of which had their good and bad points, but which I inevitably gave up for something newer or better or just generally more to my liking. But the terminal program I started out my 16-bit telecommunications career with, was Flash v1.6.

It was nice enough at the time, and certainly it was better than anything I had used on the 8-bit Atari, which I owned prior to getting my first ST. Eventually however, I found newer and better terminal programs (time has a definite effect on old software), and I ended up (after a lot of experimenting and fiddling about), with ANSITerm 1.90. It's small and it suited my needs well enough. Then my editor showed up at my doorstep with a package containing Flash II. Never one to turn down something new, I decided I'd give it a try; that's my job for this month, after all: Software Review Guru!

Flash II turned out to be an extremely easy program to install on my hard drive. No configuration files, no tedious questions, just a straight point-and-click on the INSTALL.PRG with very few choices (few are needed). I had the program loaded up and ready to roll in no time, so to speak. I immediately booted up the program and was presented with a standard GEM screen.

I should probably mention that standard GEM has never been my favorite environment in which to work. I've always found it relatively slow and generally dull to look at. Some programmers, however, have taken steps to improve GEM's looks and operation, and I must admit that they are doing a fantastic job so far. Unfortunately perhaps, Flash II does not make use of these extended GEM libraries as yet. Before reading the manual of course (that would have been far too easy), I dialed up the Internet provider at my college and logged in. So far, so good; its handling of VT-100 seemed relatively good and stable. I however,





know how to put a terminal program through its ultimate paces in this regard, having had plenty of experience (read: problems) with older terminal programs. To that end, I entered Lynx, Unix's text-only Worldwide Web browser.

Unfortunately, Flash II did not pass muster. This was fairly predictable however, because no other terminal program on the Atari has ever passed that test, either. This is because Lynx uses some rarely-used VT-100 calls that many terminal program authors fail to recognize as being important or useful enough to include in their translations. So, I put it to my second, and perhaps even more rigorous test: Internet Relay Chat, or IRC. My configuration under Unix IRC is such that I have multiple VT-100 windows in which to display various screens of information. It therefore relies heavily on strong VT-100 emulation to handle all of the different calls made by IRC. About half of the terminal programs I've ever used pass this test, so it is a better standard by which to gauge VT-100 emulation.

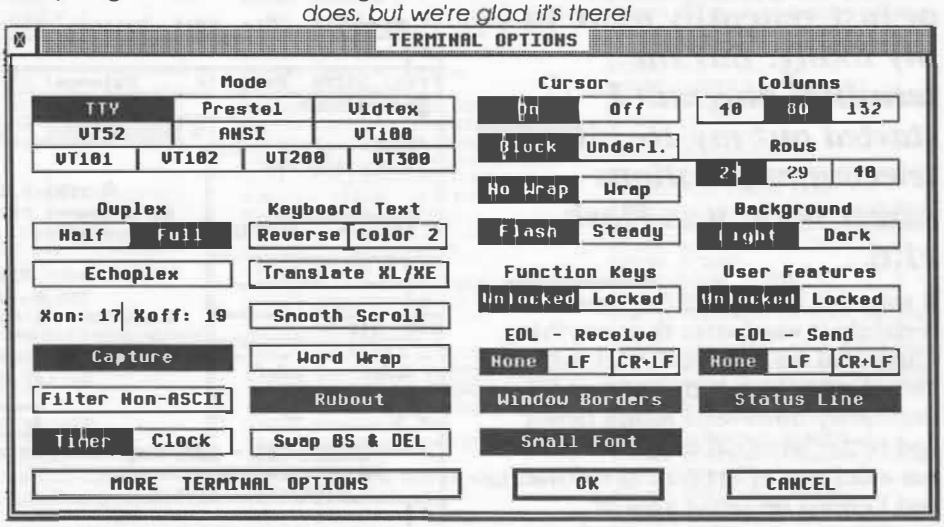
Again it failed, though not nearly so bad as some! Window dividers disappeared frequently, but everything else worked fine. With the Internet being such a big thing these days, it seemed to me that a good test of a Shell account would be in order. How to remedy these VT-100 problems? If your provider supports ANSI, I strongly recommended resetting your shell's emulation mode to this emulation as Flash II's ANSI, so far as I have been able to determine, is flawless.

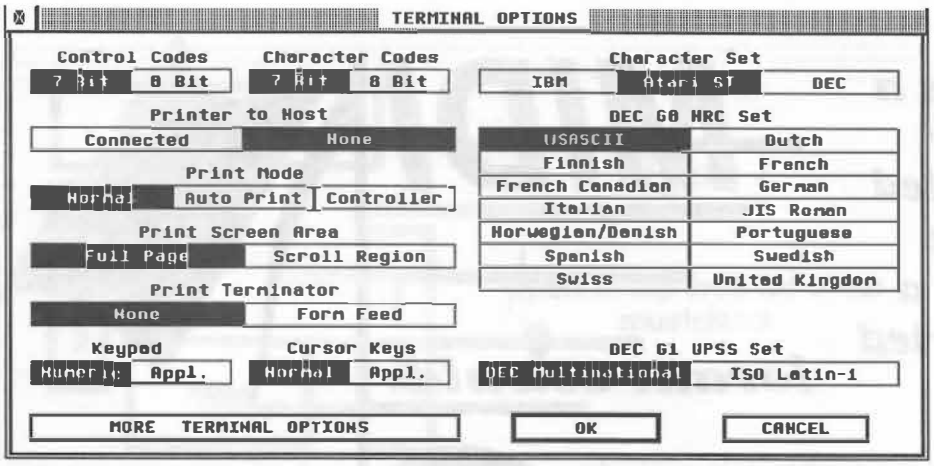
Alright, enough about terminal emulation. Let's get down to the important issues here: FEATURES! Let me tell you, there is no deficiency of features in Flash II. In fact, there are probably more features than you might comfortably know what to do with. Very nearly everything in Flash II is configurable to one degree or another, from its type-ahead buffer to its capture buffer/text editor, from its Z-Modem parameters to its feature-rich dialer. There are two full pages of terminal configuration settings, each packed with buttons to set various parameters. The layout is perhaps a bit disorganized, but this I suspect is due to the fact that there are just so many features to fit in, if the menus were set up to be eye-catching, there would have to be four screens instead of two. Then there is the dialer. This in itself contains a wealth of features. Each entry can be configured right down to the last detail, including separate macros for each entry, separate scripts, terminal emulations; every single setting that you can configure from the terminal screen can also be configured for each bulletin board entry. This alone makes Flash II's dialer superior to practically everything else. Flash II's script language too (a superset of the original Flash's '.DO' scripting language), also makes for easy, yet powerful scripts to do logins and timed events for you. There is even a mini bulletin board, which Flash II fully supports.

Flash II 3.0 comes with two manuals: One for Flash II v2.23, and an addendum manual containing all of the new features of Flash II 3.0. The manual is well laid out and professionally done, containing screenshots and plenty of examples to get you on your way. I should warn you, however, that you are going to need the manual to get up and running, as Flash II's configuration is not for the timid. There are a number of things that must be given close attention when setting things up, before perfect operation can be expected from the program. Fortunately, John Trautschold provides his E-Mail address and phone number in the manual. Anyone who has problems getting the program up and running need only call. Of course the e-mail address is there for those who are up and running, and have more technical questions. John's support is both gracious amd effective.

Flash II also comes with its own scrollback buffer/editor. It is much like a miniature word processor, featuring cut and paste options, a clipboard, block operations and search/replace functions. It is not a full-featured word processor, but it is perfect for minor edits when you've captured some interesting pieces of information that you wish to post on

Everything in Flash can be configured. Um . . . we don't know what some of this stuff does, but we're glad it's there!





Options galore! But we're dying to know the difference between French Canadian and French, eh?

your favorite bulletin board. Unfortunately, the editor has no capabilities for taking text and dumping it to the modem; it is necessary to save your capture, or a block of it to a file, and then do an ASCII upload in a message base. This is a cumbersome way of going about things. As I do in fact, capture interesting information to cross-post on my favorite bulletin board, the ability to dump information straight to the serial port would be a welcome addition to the program. For those who do not need this feature however, the issue is moot, and you will have absolutely no trouble with the program.

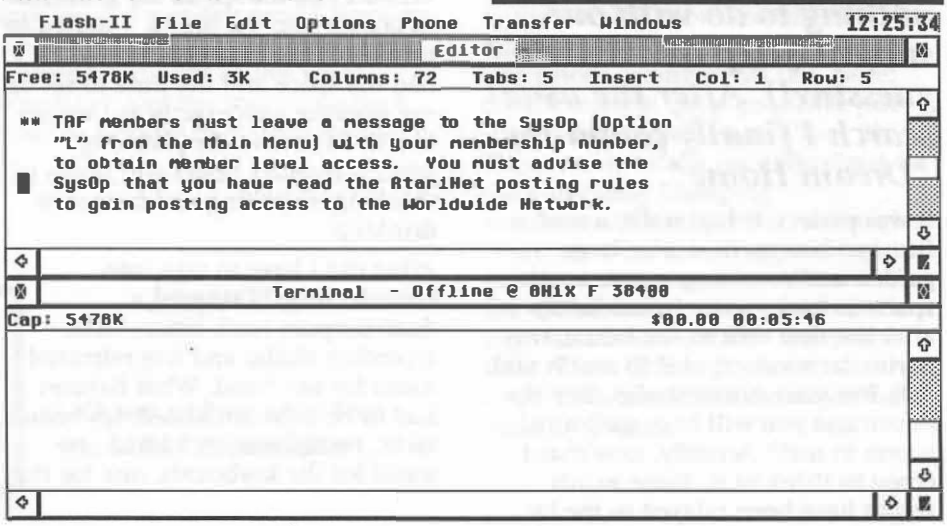
One other interesting point about the Flash II v3.0 package is that two versions of the program are supplied: Flash II v2.23 and v3.0. According to John Trautschold, the two versions are there to offer those with different system configurations the option to choose the version that best suits them. For those who do not operate in a multitasking environment, version 2.23 might be more suited to your preferences, as it runs faster than 3.0 due to the fact that it does not need to give time back to the processor in a multitasking environment. The drawback to this is that you do not get the extra features found in v3.0. Version 3.0 is more suited to users with a multitasking environment, such as Geneva, MagiC, or MultiTOS. Flash II version 3.0 is designed especially for such an environment, and can work within its own window, allowing you to do your telecommunications while working on other things. The drawback is that its operation, particularly with respect to screen updates, is noticeably slower. It's a small sacrifice however, for those wanting true multi-tasking ability in their terminal program.

A bonus in v2.23 for those who do not run within a multitasking environment but still need background operations when they do file transfers, is Silent Line. It's a small Auto Folder program which when activated by Flash II, allows all file transfers to be done in the background, permitting work on other things while the file transfer takes care of itself. Unfortunately, Silent Line doesn't support Z-Modem file transfers, but it does handle SEALink, Y-Modem Batch, Modem7, Kermit and two flavours of X-Modem. So if you're not particularly worried about how fast your transfer goes, you can select one of those protocols for use with Silent Line, and watch a transfer happen all by itself, while you go off and use your Atari as if nothing else was happening.

Overall, Flash II v3.0 is an excellent package. It has a few drawbacks: its keyboard equivalents aren't very intuitive, it does have a few small bugs, and there are the small problems mentioned earlier in this review. But these things will not affect most people. Those of you who don't ever use these options will never notice any problems, but it is only fair to mention them. I would certainly recommend this package to anyone who's looking for more power in their terminal programs. It is very well put together, comes with a smart looking, cerlox-bound set of manuals, and it works like a charm in almost every respect. Perhaps most important of all, it has power to spare. It is also important that Flash is still being constantly improved and fully supported. That means VT-100 may be perfected(!) and sending blocks from the editor to the terminal may yet be implemented. That's the nice thing about this kind of support: If there's something you want, speak your mind and you stand a very good chance of seeing it in the future.

Flash II v3.0 is available commercially for $44.95 (US) from TOAD Computers, or for $74.99 (Canadian) from Computer Direct. Upgrades from previous versions are also available at a very affordable price too, so current users of earlier versions of Flash II can easily upgrade their versions painlessly. Those who wish to get in contact with John Trautschold with questions on this package can direct their E-Mail inquiries to: ***j.trautschol@genie.com or phone Missionware: 708-359-9565.*** ▲

Like all good software, Flash II comes with an extensive manual. Read it. Read it again. Then read it once more. TOS/GEM computers are intuitive as hell, but *nothing* beats a thorough understanding of the manual!



MIDI Digital MUSIC

lorant oswald

Lorant is happy as a clam in his new house, and delighted that the humble abode came with a room which just cried out for some studio-like renovations! If the roof doesn't leak, he's all set . . .

According to world-wide research the second most stressful activity is moving into a new home (sorry, the naughty in me will leave you guessing about the first place winner!). I can certainly attest to that. After 6 years in the same, nice, rented apartment I decided to look for a house. I had several reasons to do so, a couple of which have nothing to do with our subject (keep on guessing!). After the usual search I finally found my "Dream Home".

It was perfect. It had walls, a roof, a finished basement, a nice large garden and most important, a rather spacious back room. Immediately after the first visit to the house, this particular room 'spoke' to me: It said: "Hi, I'm your future studio. Buy the house and you will have unlimited access to me!" Actually, now that I come to think of it, those words might have been relayed to me by the real estate agent. In any case, I bought the house, I'm very happy with it and yes, you have guessed it right (see, it was worth practicing), I built my studio in this room.

Before I go on, you must know something about me: I'm lazy. I have the mental alertness to avoid hard work. I am a genius at doing nothing, and doing it assiduously. Lots of people seek my advice all the time. They are people who realize that solutions offered by a lazy person tend to be the simplest of all. Practically, it means that I would rather let things lie around for weeks until I find the best possible place for them, instead of just putting them away.

When I had moved all my gear (still in boxes) into the house, I started to think. For the first time in my life I had the space and the time to set up my working area exactly as I would like it. Of course the planning process requires hours and hours of thinking, sketching and beer drinking.

What did I have to take into consideration? I wanted a dual-purpose work space: MIDI recording studio and live rehearsal room for our band. What fixtures had to be accommodated: keyboards, racks, book cases, etc? I had one stand for the keyboards, one for the rack cases, a computer desk and as many book cases as I wanted. There were also the studio monitors to be considered: their location is of the utmost importance. I also had to find space within reach for the 8-track cassette recorder, the mixdown machine, the practice drum pad set, chairs and stands for the musicians, etc.

Once I knew what I had to deal with, I started to make specific plans. First consideration: I had four main units (the keyboards, the desk, the rack and the shelves for the cassette recorders and all the miscellaneouss stuff), that needed to be within very easy reach at all times. It made perfect sense to form a square with them. Obviously, this square would have to be in one of the corners, so that space could be left for rehearsals. Next, I had to decided the location of the four items within the square. The computer monitor couldn't be allowed to reflect the light coming through the two large windows. The desk went in front of the window, so that the monitor faced away from the light. Since I'm better playing keyboard with my left hand compared to handling the mouse or even typing, the stand with the keyboards was placed near the left side of the desk. The rackmount cases house several sound modules, drum machines and the keyboard mixer as well as all the external sound

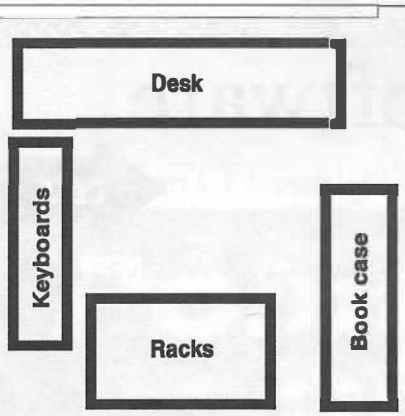


Figure 1

Open setup area for other musicians

processing gear: effects, noise reduction, compressor, EQ, exciter and the power amp. It made perfect sense therefore, to have the these units next to the keyboards. The rest of the stuff went by default, to the right of the desk. Figure 1 is my first setup.

This setup would have worked extremely well, but for one little thing: at rehearsals I would have to play with my back to the rest of the group. Next idea, please.

The monitor cannot move. The keyboards could move to either the south or the east side of the block. The south side placement had the disadvantage, however, of putting the keyboards and the computer on opposite sides. Since they are being used simultaneously most of the time, they need to be side by side. That means keyboards to the east. I would be able to see everybody (and the computer) at the same time. The setup looked like Figure 2. It's the setup I stayed with.

As you can see in Figure 2, the book case ended up on the south side and the rack on the west wall. Guess why. Anybody? Keep guessing, and if you find a good reason, please let me know. I sure don't remember why I chose this solution, but it works well. (Ok, one possible reason I've come up with is that I didn't want the cables from the back of the rack hanging into the room, creating a hazard for the rehearsing musicians. Yeah, this is a good one. I'm a responsible adult.) Actually, I may exchange the locations of the rack and the shelves, just to see how it works out. It's important to be flexible and to experiment.

Once my setup was complete I could start to think about the placement of the rest of the stuff I had collected over the years: several thousand books, piles of sheet music, the record and CD collection, etc. I also had to make the room sound better (more studio-like), keeping the music in and the noises out. Interestingly, the house is furnished with ugly acoustic tiles on the ceiling, except for the studio! I could thow away my reverb unit!? Since my recording is solely MIDI-based (with a minimal amount of live vocal recording), and the studio is a back room in a house in a relatively quiet neighbourhood, I decided not to use any expensive sound proofing, but to hit two birds with one bazooka: I covered cover the walls with my books. I have enough identical, white book cases from the Swedish furniture store whose name I don't want to mention (they don't play my jingles, I don't plug their products), so this was easy. I spent four marvelous days in June unpacking over 50 boxes of books and music. I indulged in alphabetizing, categorizing and re-reading some of my old favorites and discovering new ones. Again for the first time in my life, I also had enough space to put all the software manuals in one place, next to the computer. Several new disk storage boxes later the studio, nay, THE STUDIO was ready to go. Almost. Actually, not really. Nothing was plugged in, yet!

I needed to find a system, that worked technically, which did not require the purchase of more cables. You know, how it is, you always have twenty one extra cables but if you need one, they either have the wrong kind of plug, are 3" inches too short or 30' too long. In addition, signing my life away to the mortgage company for the next 25 years had calmed my otherwise prominent cable-buying urges.

My studio is working very well. I'm able to relax and browse through messages on the TAF BBS, play the occasional solitaire game, practice some wicked licks, search for new sound combinations, record or mixdown my high quality, low-priced arrangments (Ed. Note: Lorant really is quite good. We just wish he'd stop telling us about it). The setup is totally individualized for the constantly changing requirements of my trade, although I think my criteria and arguments are based on common sense. I can use the entire setup or any parts of it in any combination at any time, with little effort. This is the most important thing because remember, I'm a lazy man!

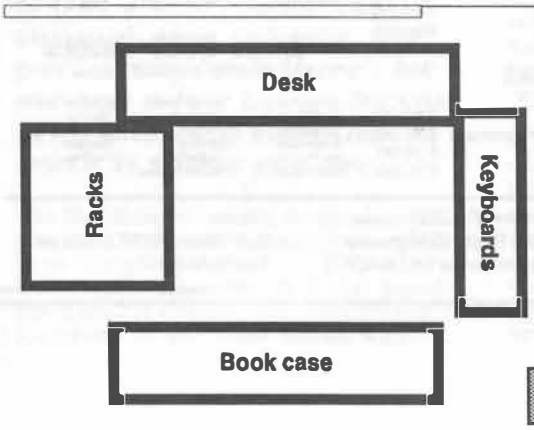


Figure 2

Open setup area for other musicians

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Point of Light

errol bruce-knapp

Look, though I know you probably aren't going to know any of the answers to my questions, you'll surely recognise the words and perhaps their implication, and I really need to get these questions asked. They've been lurking around the periphery of what I refer to (flinchingly) as my consciousness. Sure there are a million questions about life, the universe and everything; but I'd like to narrow the search down to just the universe.

Mulder and lately, Scully (or is it Chris Carter?), maintain that 'The Truth is Out There'. Since you through this column, are part of my 'out-there', let me run a few things by you. Who knows, p'raps the truth is where you are.

The first thing concerns an incident that you must be aware of, unless you've lately been living in a cave.
Back in the summer of 1947 Mac Brazel, a rancher near Corona, New Mexico had found one of his 'fields' strewn with debris which his sheep refused to flock through. Mac thought that the 'guvamint' would reward him handsomely for reporting his find, so he drove the thirty odd miles into town and reported it.
Major Jesse Marcel, Intelligence Officer United States Army Air Corps, based at the Roswell Army Air Force base in New Mexico, was sent out to check out Brazel's story, brought to the base by the county Sheriff. Marcel found debris scattered over a square mile; stuff that he described in later years as looking like "some kind of aluminum-like material, you could crumple up only to have it slowly return to its original shape and small beam-like pieces, with hieroglyphs on them, which I couldn't burn, cut or break; it seemed to be indestructible."
Question number one: If the Roswell wreckage was so 'indestructible', how come it 'destructed' in the first place and rained down on Mac Brazel's home on the sheep range?
Wherever these sentient beings come from, why is it that some of them apparently 'crash' here on Earth? With technology that far surpasses ours they surely have the ability to journey here, collect what they need and return home! Or is it that the law of averages also applies to them: tens of thousands of trips equals a wipe-out or two?
Kevin Randle (he of recent 'Roswell' books) was on the 'Rolonda Show' in late '94:

ROLONDA: If these guys are so advanced why the heck do they crash?
KEVIN RANDLE: Good question. But everybody makes mistakes. My favorite theory is what they were doing is figuring out the most non-threatening way to identify themselves to us. A crashed spaceship and alien bodies is not very threatening and they announced themselves. Our government fooled them by hiding it.
Damn 'Guvamint' is doing it to everyone including its own...
On July 8, 1947, the Roswell Army Air Field (RAAF) Public Information Office issued a press-release announcing the crash and recovery of a 'flying disc'; personnel from the 509th Bomb Group based at Roswell were credited with the recovery. The following day, Commanding General Ramey of the U.S. Eighth Air Force, Fort Worth, Texas, announced that what RAAF personnel had actually recovered was a crashed radar-tracking (weather) balloon not a flying disc.
In 1992 Congressman Steve Schiff(D) NM, having been briefed by some of his ufologist constituents, was intrigued enough with the story of a UFO crash at Roswell to courageously ask 'official' questions. Schiff was repeatedly stone-walled in his efforts and recently described his search for information.
"Roswell had received national and international attention because, as you know, the Army Air Corps originally said that they had 'retrieved something extraterrestrial'. They called it a 'flying disk'," said Schiff, "and what I've been doing is looking for what records the government has, if any, about the Roswell Incident for the purpose of making them public and allowing people to make up their own minds. I discovered that a number of members of Congress, including myself, passed this [request for information] on to the Secretary of Defence for a response, and all of us were simply referred to the National Archives. That was a run-around because the National Archives had no material on Roswell and I'm sure the Defense Department knew it. I was the only one indignant enough about the run-around to take it another step. I asked the General Accounting Office to look further into the matter."

"The military at Roswell at the very least had a lot of explaining to do, assuming this was a 'weather balloon'; you have a situation where the best bomber group in the US Army Air Corps (note: the 509th dropped the atomic-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki), doesn't know a weather balloon from a flying saucer, and it seems to me somebody on high is going to be a little concerned about that. The extent of military intervention leaves suspicion that this was not just a weather balloon."

When Schiff first met with the GAO, and because of his experience with the military and military procedures, he suggested that one area to be looked into was the Roswell base's 'outgoing messages'. Those messages were 'military telegrams' that went back and forth on teletype links, between the 509th Bomber

Unit at Roswell, the 8th Army Air Corps Headquarters at Fort Worth, Texas and the Defense Department in Washington, DC.

Schiff then pointed out that these messages would have shown how military officials in Roswell were explaining to their superiors exactly what happened.

"My reasoning is, especially in 1947, you could only call one person at a time on a telephone. A message could alert...they had a system where you can alert several, different, higher headquarters simultaneously. So that the outgoing messages would have had some information as to what was going on."

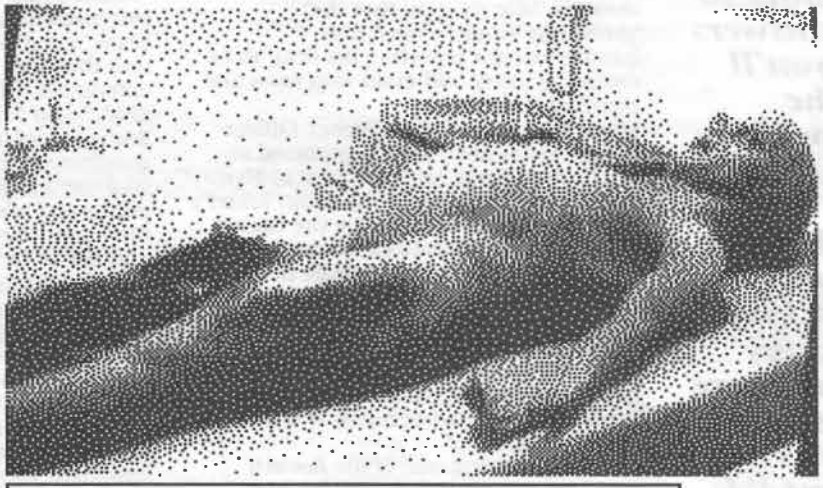
The GAO Report, published July 28, 1995, stated that the outgoing messages from Roswell Army Air Field (RAAF) from October 1946 through December 1949 were destroyed without proper authority! Someone had asked Schiff, "how do you know they didn't just explain it on the telephone and never used messages?" He responded: "Of course, I don't know that for sure and now we'll never know because the messages aren't available in any form...my understanding is that these outgoing messages were permanent records, which should never have been destroyed. The GAO could not identify who destroyed the messages, or why. The GAO estimates that the messages were destroyed over 40 years ago, making further enquiry about their destruction impractical."

"So, the most potentially significant documents are missing," he continued. "Now, translate that - nobody knows who destroyed them or why... whether that adds to a theory of government conspiracy to avoid releasing information or it's just a coincidence because other similar documents are missing...I can't offer a judgement in my official role as a US representative. I hope I'm open-minded about events and willing to look at all suggestions, but that's me as an individual. As a US Representative what I've been involved in was trying to determine what records exist in government archives and to get those released. And that's one of the reasons why I haven't gone out of my way to start spreading my own view of the Roswell Incident because I think it detracts from my primary role which is to try to dig out what is there."

The GAO enquiries resulted in the September 1994 Air Force withdrawal of the weather balloon story and confession to a Top Secret balloon project, designed to monitor Soviet nuclear bomb testing, known as 'Project Mogul'. That's quite odd really, because the USSR didn't start nuclear testing until 1949.

So, why did the 'Roswell Autopsy Film' surface at a time when the United States Air Force was having to respond to the General Accounting Office and Congressman Steve Schiff, defending its actions?

The autopsy film depicts an alien-looking creature (see the still-frame elsewhere on this page) being not very professionally sliced and diced by a couple of 'radiation-suit' clad humans. The 'set' looks genuine enough, a 1937 vintage phone on the wall caused a stir because of its 'curly-cord', which some maintained hadn't become available until the mid-fifties. A microphone suspended from the ceiling also drew several megabytes of scorn, but also proved to be of mid-forties vintage.



Real? Not real? This clip from the now famous film, sure is interesting to look at . . .

The damn thing looks real; the 'pathologists' almost look real. To me they just don't exude the kind of interest in their work on the corpse that suggests they're examining an alien. It feels too rushed. Nothing is weighed, there's a paucity of note-taking. The feeling is that everyone's in a rush to get through it so they can get to lunch. There's no sense of wonder from them. They've seen it all before?

The conspiracists among ufologists are now 'pretty damn sure' that the autopsy film showing up when it did was too much of a 'god-send' to be coincidence. It shifted the focus of attention from the GAO report to Ray Santilli, a British film-producer touring the States looking for "early, undiscovered Elvis footage."

"This chap had some Elvis stuff that I'd never seen and I was thrilled. And he said 'If you think that's good you should see this!' He pulled out several cans of film, which included the 'autopsy' footage."

The 'chap' was a 'US ex-military' cameraman named 'Jack Barnet'; a pseudonym apparently created by Santilli to protect his identity, presumably from the IRS. Santilli is reputed to have paid over $100,000 for the footage.

'Barnet' held back those cans of film because they needed 'special processing' whilst the bulk of the footage went to Washington. 'He' claims that when the time came to send the film he'd held back, 'Washington' did not return any of his repeated calls. This is footage of what he described as being the most amazing stuff he'd ever shot! This is footage of an autopsy of an extra-terrestrial and Washington didn't return his calls?

Santilli has a blow-up of Sgt. Ernie Bilko above his desk in his London, England office, an insight perhaps to his modus operandi? He has steadfastly refused to send Kodak labs any samples of the original footage with 'autopsy' images on it for conclusive dating analysis of the chemicals used in its processing. He did send Kodak a copy of the edge code from the film, which dates the film's manufacture to either 1927, '47, or '67. He also claims the remainder of the footage he bought from 'Barnet', has been sold to either a German or Japanese collector who 'refuses' to allow it to be shown publicly. And he has made several buckets o'bucks from the sale of videos of the film.

Still, the question remains:if (and it's a large 'IF'), the film is genuine, why wouldn't he allow a dozen frames of the original to be examined? In view of the film being potentially one of the most important events in the history of humanity Santilli's behavior is incomprehensible and reprehensible.

It now transpires that Santilli is quite heavily involved with a special effects production company, who probably are quite capable of creating an 'alien autopsy' film, which in my mind hammers the final nail into the 'Autopsy' casket.

So, let's add another 'interesting' into the Roswell melange...

Elsewhere in this computationally splendid publication, our steaming Managing Editor oft mentions his girlfriend, a bright, perceptive, articulate and astute being. What lucky guys you and I are Howard, for my S.O., Sue is also one such bright, perceptive, etc., etc.

Sue posted the following, on the MUFON BBS that sits here beside me, back in August of '95. I, being the doting kind,

felt it deserved to be cross-posted far and wide and dumped it into several UFO groups and conferences. Those of you who caught the X-Files two-parter at the end of November will doubtless recognise the following as part of the plotline. Incidentally, one of my best friends who works on the 'Files', called the night before the first part aired and described how post-production on it had been completed only a couple of hours before his call.

<<<>>>August 25, 1995
Post a message in UFO General & NetSpeak? [y/N]: yes
ooo Msg To: All
ooo Subject: Roswell vs. Unit 731
UFO UpDates SmartEditor - Maximum of 1600 Lines
I happened to catch and tape a show on Dateline (NBC) last week on a subject that was disturbing not only to those interviewed but to myself. It focused on a 50 year secret held by the US government on a Japanese military secret called Unit 731 during W.W.II. Human experimentation (biological warfare, live autopsies, injections, etc.) were carried out on Korean and Chinese civilians and prisoners of war. The prisoners were British, Australian and American and what they described seemed to parallel good old Adolph. We have seen what Hitler's prisoners looked like but do we really know to what extent the lives of Unit 731's victims were interfered with? Unit 731 was Japanese but the Dateline report linked the US government to the savage indignities innocent victims were subjected to. The post-war US government gave immunity to the leaders of the inhumane Unit 731 and actually shipped them to the US to continue their experiments. Oh, what a Cold, Cold War indeed.
My feelings in relation to the Roswell film and Unit 731 are that they are one in the same, a government experiment gone wrong.
Like Roswell and the GAO report, there are crucial documents that have gone missing for reasons unknown. The Chinese have stated they had already seen the Roswell autopsy footage. (When?). Injuries to the being in the footage are extraordinarily similar to those on the creature used in Roswell: The Movie (Martin Sheen) which came out _last_ year.
"A balloon" the government claimed - perhaps. But maybe one the Japanese had sent over, carrying a possible biological threat to the US, which Dateline reported was an ongoing event in the 40's (termites infected with typhoid aimed at California). As Stephen Schiff said on 'Larry King Live', the extent of military intervention leaves suspicion that this was not just a weather balloon.
The Russians were also aiding Unit 731. In 'The FBI' (Kessler) it is noted that the Russians were in the habit of sending spy balloons over the US (made of material other than that used for normal weather balloons). Perhaps the symbols on the 'Roswell wreckage' were highly unusual to a farmer from the 40's.
I am sure Russian and Japanese were not languages every good ole down-to-earth American farmer could identify.
I think that the last 50 years have been a game of hide and seek, and right now I think the US is 'it'. As all things eventually come to light, the truth is easier to take in the beginning. Why waste everyone's time playing these little charades. If you're doing something 'not everyone' will approve of, well that's life. Admit your mistakes and move on to create a better world rather than have everyone breathing down each other's throats and creating insanity.
Unfortunately some people thrive on creating nonsense because they know '50% of the people will believe and 50% will not'. But which 50% is right? This is no way to exist.
We want the truth and we want it now!!! This is really starting to piss me off. If this is the American way, thank God I'm Canadian.
Hey, maybe I'm a government experiment too. Maybe it's all a planetary conspiracy (Yeah right, I know get a life. Can you please tell me which intersection to turn at so I can go and get one.)
Cheers to the day. Take f for Freedom out of Life and what do you get? Take 'V' for Victory out of Lives and what do you get?

Sue<<<>>>
Are there 'Dis-information Operatives' working in the UFO Newsgroups on the net? What? Our governments are deliberately misleading or leading us? Take 'Dean Adams'. Adams is an articulate and skilled player. His knowledge and information on aircraft & satellites is cogent and useful. Adams is a hard-line non-UFO-believer (a 'skeptibunker'). Consequently, his posting value is questionable. Are his posts information or 'dis-information'? His 'Net-ittude' begs a sub-question: Why?
If this man is a 'civilian' why is it that his zeal is un-flagging, un-relenting, completely un-comprehensible. He spends several hours a day and almost seven days a week, puzzling me.

Here's what a major contributor to alt.alien.visitors, Brian Zeiler had to say about Adams recently:

<<<>>>"The reason I never believed him is because he lied viciously about the Edwards Air Force Base control tower recordings during a UFO incident as being 'hoaxed', despite the obvious fact that almost every AFB in the USA has had a UFO incident that reached no conclusion one way or the other. And sure enough, the recordings that surfaced in the National Archives are totally boring. All they do is describe the UFO just like in the FOIA documents. No aliens waving through the portholes or landing on the ground; just the type of recording you'd expect to occur during one of the FOIA-released incidents."
"The most telling aspect was Dean's insistence that the Cash-Landrum case was characterized by the US choppers chasing, not escorting, the glowing orange blob that powerfully irradiated Betty Cash. She and her passenger described the 20 or so helicopters as escorting the blob at a slow speed, and she felt the blob was a malfunctioning experimental nuclear-powered vehicle like a nuclear sub. This is the consensus among researchers as well. The US successfully defended [against] her lawsuit, insisting that they had no such craft; typical "blame the UFO" propaganda to save a few million bucks and deprive an innocent woman of the restitution owed her for having her life ruined from a failed experiment. I hope they paid her under the table at least. But Dean took the 'intelligence line', saying the choppers were "chasing, not escorting" the blob, implying that it wasn't one of our craft! If the orange radioactive blob-craft wasn't ours, whose was it? Aliens, Dean? The Soviets doing routine flight tests in Texas??? Clearly, Dean knows what to say and what not to say. He's way up there, that's for sure, and he spends an hour a day debunking UFOs as a corollary to his job."<<<>>>
Dean Adams is not the only 'Psy-Op' (Psychological Operative) on the nets. (Hmm, do I almost catch myself feeling a bit paranoid?). G.K. Smiley, an 'operative'(?) who's mentioned that he works for Ames Labs and is to quote him "a US official," is a major UFO debunker. Smiley too, cruises the Newsgroups and often tag-teams with James Oberg (of NASA and OMNI magazine), to rip use.net posters to shreds. And to what end? Are their lives so extraordinarily dull, so devoid of joy that they feel the need to flex their intellectual muscles? Methinks not. Neither do others...

Brian Zeiler <bdzeiler@students.wisc.edu> again: <<<>>>"It would be nice if Dean and Smiley were a little more honest about themselves and about UFOs in general around here. But, judging by past behavior, Smiley will ignore this thread and Dean will attribute everything I've said to my "gullible believer lunatic fringe" tendencies. Very predictable algorithms, these two...makes me wonder about their intentions."<<<>>> ▲

Errol is somewhat skeptical. He is also concerned about some obvious lies. You can quiz him through MUFON (the Mutual UFO Network).

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letters: fun, opinion, anger, technobabble, questions . . . and a few answers

KID STUFF?

I have just received an Atari ST1040 w/printer and screen from by brother. He bought a new one. The computer is for my 11 year old daughter who is beginning to write papers/reports for school. I am not computer literate and it has been difficult to find info and software for the machine. The machine came with Word–Up and Degas program but no directions. I am interested in subscribing to your magazine. Thank you.

(CN): Good computer . . . old computer. It needs upgrading in the worst way. Call STeve's Atari Sales in California at (916) 661-1234. Steve Kipker has loads of educational stuff for that machine. He's also got a repair and upgrade service, and can handle your needs via mail. He'll also be able to sell you something more substantial than WordUp and Degas (which were fine in their day; they're more than a little arthritic now).

WE LIVE!!

I hadn't received an issue of CURRENT NOTES for sometime, and thought it was just because I have recently moved. But in reading the latest postings, I see there has been some delays??? My MAR/APR issue was forwarded just fine. Now I'm not even sure where to send my change of address, so I will post it here and hope for the best. My label shows I am current thru N–D 95. CN10315S 27 if you also need that. I have been with CURRENT NOTES almost from the beginning, and feel it is along with Genie, one of the last connections of a fading but much beloved ATARI–WORLD. By the way is ATARI–USER dead for good this time??? Marilyn Merica.

(CN): Delays, delays and more delays ‹sigh›. But we're all done now, happy and glad. The address to send all Changes of Address is: Current Notes, 559 Birchmount Rd. #2, Scarborough ON, Canada, M1K 1P8. Atari User magazine has been dead for quite a few months and there is no sign it will ever be resurrected.

PHONY LETTER!

Dear CN:
How come I can't log on to my local BBS? Every time I call the stupid number, it's busy (most of the time anyway). I can't afford to pay for the commercial online services, and the free BBS is the best thing for me. But I can't get on to type my messages, most of the time.

Krakus Wangripper
Mote Prime
Oort Cloud, South

(CN): Hey Krakus . . . you're a symptom of your own affliction. The reason for the delay you run into, is the reason you want to get on-line in the first place - everybody likes to log on, browse messages, and type their responses while on-line. That all takes a lot of time, hogging a phone line while doggedly pecking away with one or two finger typing. Tell the Sysop to *insist* that his BBS members all use an Off-line Reader - *every* computing platform has a variety of fine off-line readers (a lot of them are inexpensive Shareware, too!). And I'll bet the file area on that BBS probably has 3 or 4 off-line readers to choose from. Try a few . . . and above all else, insist that others do the same.

SOMEBODY HELP THIS GUY

My interest is to reach persons who are familiar with Atari products. Locally there isn't much of a market. Anything I buy for my ST has to be purchased through a mail-order company such as Toad Computers. Another question I have is about the XL/XE Atari 8-Bit emulator for the ST and PCXformer for the PC. Can these emulators use old 8-Bit cartridges? Michael Dengler.

(CN): If you love TOS and GEM, you also have to love (or at least learn to co-exist with), mail order. Luckily there are some genuinely superb full-service mail order houses from which North American Atari TOS/GEM users can choose: TOAD Computers, Computer Direct, Systems for Tomorrow, STeve's Atari Sales, Falcon Systems, Computer Studio, and a few others. In addition, the major North American TOS/GEM developers sell direct to the public: Oregon Research, Gribnif, Trace Technologies, Migraph, ABC Solutions, CyberCube Research, DMC Publishing, Application & Design, It's All Relative, chro_Magic and so on.

ERRATA: In the Sept/Oct issue, on page 26, the FIG 17 graphic is covering some text (oops). Here's what's missing: 'UIS III is a commercial product marketed by Application & Design Software. You can order it direct from A&D at 1-800-800-2563 or buy it from any Atari dealer. The best dealers keep UIS III in stock of course. FASTPATH (demo), Boxkite, Selectric, LGS & Freedom are all in the TAF 16/32-Bit Library, Suzy B's Software, and most good Atari TOS/GEM file sites (BBS, ftp, etc.) - ask your Sysop. With 4 of the 5 file selectors reviewed being shareware, it's easy to see why the Atari software market is alive and well. Registering any of these selectors (or purchasing UIS III), is an exceedingly low cost way to help optimize your computer use.'

DON'T BE SHY . . .

I got hold of a copy of Geneva. It's a used copy and I don't know whether or not to call or write to Gribnif Software. I'd like to re-register it if I can, and get whatever on-line support is available and whatnot. The copy I bought belonged to a registered user, who'd originally purchased the program from a dealer. Is this really legal? I know it goes on all the time, but do developers

like Gribnif have to honor these sales?
(CN): Call, write, send e-mail; don't be shy. Theoretically (according to most licence agreements), the right to use commercial software packages is not transferable. But, there isn't a developer on earth who won't appreciate the owner of a used package who re-registers. On rare occassions, some support services for major PC/MAC applications may ask for a small service charge (to cover phone/e-mail support, and administration costs), but most TOS/GEM developers don't do that. TOS/GEM developers (many of whom have been viciously hit by pirates), generally welcome the chance to register owners like you, Jeff. The user they know, is the user they can sell an upgrade to (or another one of their products altogether). Some developers will ask you to send in your Master Disk(s), for registration purposes, and request that you also send a check for $10 to cover return shipping & handling. CN believes that such a fee is money well spent!

FOULED FALCON

After using one of the Falcon030 NVRAM config utilities (I think it was called BOOTCONF.PRG), my bird won't boot properly. The screen is jumbled, and I can't read the boot messages. The ICD utilities don't seem to have anything that can help. Did I ruin my computer? Is there something I'm missing? Dean Simmonds, Brooklyn Heights, NY

(CN): The problem with 'tinkering' is that you sometimes can't 'un-tinker'. There's help however, in the guise of Keith Gerdes' FALCON Toolkit. It's a reasonably priced set of utilities that all Falcon owners should have. It is available on a single disk, and one of the very handy utilities is called 'RESETNVR.PRG'. Guess what it does? Uh-huh . . . It will reset your NVRAM chip to factory specs. After you've fixed your problem, use 'CFGNVRAM.PRG' to safely change your boot parameters. There's a lot more on the disk (including a terrific CPX for formatting disks (read the review in this issue), and you can order it from either Trace Technologies (call (713) 771-8332), or ABC Solutions (call (416) 752-2744)

SET THAT BIT

I liked your article on file selectors, as well as the rest of the "launch issue". One feature of FSELV60 (a file selector which is no longer supported), and not called by newer programs runningin later TOS, is extended 'touch' abilities. One feature I like to have is the option to make the time/date stamp what it should have been, rather than the current date and time. That corrects for my errors in setting up SuperBoot, and leaving out any programs that set the system clock. I am not going to register, buy or download any file selector that will not do that. Which, if any, do that?

Jim Declerq/Primenet

(CN): TOS allows you to set something in a file called the 'Archive Bit'. When this bit is set, you can write to the file, change the file, and re-save it . . . without altering the original time/date stamp of the file. Superb utilities such as Maxifile and Kobold (and others), provide options to set various file Flags (read, read/write, touch, fastload bit, archive bit, etc.), simply by highlighting a file and clicking on the appropriate option. Maxifile is a commercial program still being distributed and sold, although the maker - Codehead Technologies - is no longer actively participating in the TOS/GEM business. Maxi can be found used at flea markets, in on-line classified ads, and so on. Kobold is now at version 3 (although version 2 can still be found on store shelves). It is also a commercial program. Kobold does not have all of the marvelous housekeeping features of Maxi, but it does have the most incredibly fast file moving, copying and deletion routines in the business. Demos of Maxi and Kobold can be found on-line, at various ftp sites and in most good TOS/GEM disk libraries (check your user group library, if you have one). Download from GEnie, ftp from 'micros.hensa.ac.uk', or contact Suzy B's Software (716) 298-1986.

INF/ACC/ACX/PRG

I've been using a Mega STe with TOS 2.06 for about 2 years now. I've recently had something occur to me that I can't seem to figure out. It goes like this: if simply double clicking on a PRG launches a program, and if some Accessories can be re-named with the PRG extension (and then run by double clicking), how come I can't just double click on the ACC? Why do I have to change the name from ACC to PRG before it will run with a double click?

Gene Michalski, Dauphin MB, Canada

You can Gene, but you've got to make a small change to your NEWDESK.INF file(s). Open NEWDESK in a text editor and look for the line '#G 03 FF 000 *.PRG@ @ @ '. Make sure you leave a space after the last '@' symbol, hit the 'Return' key, and on the next line type '#G 03 FF 000 *.ACC@ @ @ '. Repeat the process for the extension 'ACX'. If you're using a boot manager (Superboot, XBoot, Desk Manager, Stoop, etc.), you can add these lines to all of the INF files you use. Once you reboot and load one of the altered INF files, you'll find you can now double click on any ACC or ACX file and run it (as long as the ACC was also designed to run as a PRG - many are not written that way). All you've done by adding the lines to NEWDESK, is to let TOS know that the exttensions ACC and ACX are desktop executables. As always, don't use a word processor to alter a NEWDESK.INF file unless it is capable of saving or exporting files as plain ASCII; a utility text Editor such as Edit Plus, Edith Professional, Alice, or Everest is usually a better choice.

"I VANT TO BE ALONE"

My local dealer has completely abandoned Atari software and hardware, except for the Jaguar. He's also getting out of most of his MAC software and hardware. I'm left with a tough decision: what do I do to obtain the newer Atari software as it's released, if I don't like mail order? The other question I have is about MAC stuff (if you can help, that is). If I move to a MAC, will I just be jumping from the frying pan into the fire, since MAC seems to be taking such a beating in the marketplace too? I own a Falcon030 system, with SVGA monitor.

Katherine Lowell, Galveston Texas

If you're doing well with your Falcon, getting your work done, pursuing hobbles, and so on, then

TAF Libraries by Mail

Miss the meeting? Long-distance TAF member? Do you need great Atari, TOS/GEM Shareware, Freeware & PD software?

Per Disk:
ST/STe/Falcon disks - $6 or $8/non-members
XL/XE disks - $5 or $6/non-members
Make all checks out to: 'Toronto Atari Federation'

Send your Check or M.O. to:
Toronto Atari Federation
5334 Yonge St. Suite 1527
Willowdale, ON M2N 6M2

you're going to have to get used to mail order. The nice thing about the situation is that the vast majority of Atari TOS/GEM mail order houses are honest and efficient, and most of them also have '800' (toll free) order lines.

Whenever you make a purchase via mail order, be sure to call first to confirm version numbers, product availability, compatibility, and system requirements. Remember that while a product may be available when you phone, it may be sold by the time your order reaches the merchant; make sure you ask about back order policy. If you want fast service, send a money order or bank draft with your order, rather than a personal check; most mail order houses will wait until your check clears the bank before shipping the order (a process which can take up to 3 weeks).

As far as the MAC is concerned, you've got to make some hard decisions on your own. Atari, Amiga and MAC were never destined to achieve the market pre-eminence of IBM, Microsoft, Intel, et al. Apple Corp actually gained a point (or so) of market share over the past 18 months; from 8% to 9%. Big deal! The point is that we'll always be in the clear minority with our current choices. And being in the minority (being different, basically), is one of the reasons we choose Atari TOS/GEM or MACs in the first place. What matters most is, being able to accomplish the work that is most important to you. If the tools you've chosen are effective and easy to use, then you've made the right decision!

That's it for this month's letters. Send questions, answers, suggestions and comments to: Current Notes Magazine, 559 Birchmount Rd. #2, Toronto Canada, M1K 1P8. You can also e-mail us at: hcarson@io.org or redfrog@io.org

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deals! bargains! fast sales! rare items! info!

FOR SALE: Best offer takes it! 1050 disk drive, 130XE, 800 computer, pack of game carts, pack of disk software, some ST productivity (word processing) software. Specify interest and mail stamp to: Michael Dengler, 882 Richard Drive, Lebanon, PA 17046

FOR SALE: Outline Art 3-$35 (new), NeoDesk 3-$25 (new), Invision Elite-$25 (new), MultiDesk Deluxe-$15 (used), Data Diet 1-$10 (used), GenieTrac (Genius) PC TrackBall-$40 (used). One at a time or the whole lot for $140. Shipping extra. Call Elliott (416) 752-2744, or e-mail 'hcarson@io.org'.

ATTENTION DEALERS: 10 copies K-Spread4 Lite, brand new in the box. $20 each or all 10 for $190. Freight extra. Call ABC Solutions at (416) 752-2744, or e-mail 'howard.carson@canrem.com'.

TRANSLATIONS: German to English. Professional quality, verbatim translations. Accuracy guranteed. Inquire about rates at Proton Research. Send e-mail to: 'lianne@io.org'.

Current Notes cannot verify the accuracy of these classifieds. Buy and sell at your own risk. Be careful. Verfiy everything.

USER GROUPS: The Toronto Atari Federation is still the largest Atari User Group in North America. Membership is $35Cdn/year for Cdn residents or $35US/year for U.S. residents. Membership includes Phoenix Newsletter subscription, 16/32-Bit Library discounts, full meeting privileges, BBS access and more. Send check or M.O. to: TAF, 5334 Yonge St. Suite 1527, Willowdale ON, Canada, M2N 6M2.

WANTED, WANTED: The Toronto Atari Federation wants to buy a Mega4 STe is good condition. Should have TOS 2.05 or 2.06. Hard Drive NOT necessary. Must have a good floppy drive, motherboard and keyboard. Call (416) 225-5823 and leave a message or e-mail 'taf@io.org'.

Hands On Communication specializes in magazine and educational book design and publishing. If you are teaching courses at high school, college or university and write your own manuals and students guides contact us to see how we can turn your writing time into money making time. We also do newsletters for non-profit organizations. Contact Hands On Comunication, 559 Birchmount Rd Unit 2, Scarborough ON M1K 1PB. On the Internet: redfrog@io.org.

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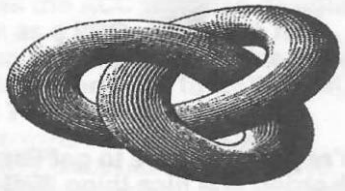
*NeoDesk 4
*Formatters: which one is best?
*RTFM !!
*Keyboard Gizmo!
*To Cache or NOT to Cache?
*Jag Games: what's hot this month?
*The Best Of ProTOS
*Much, Much More!!



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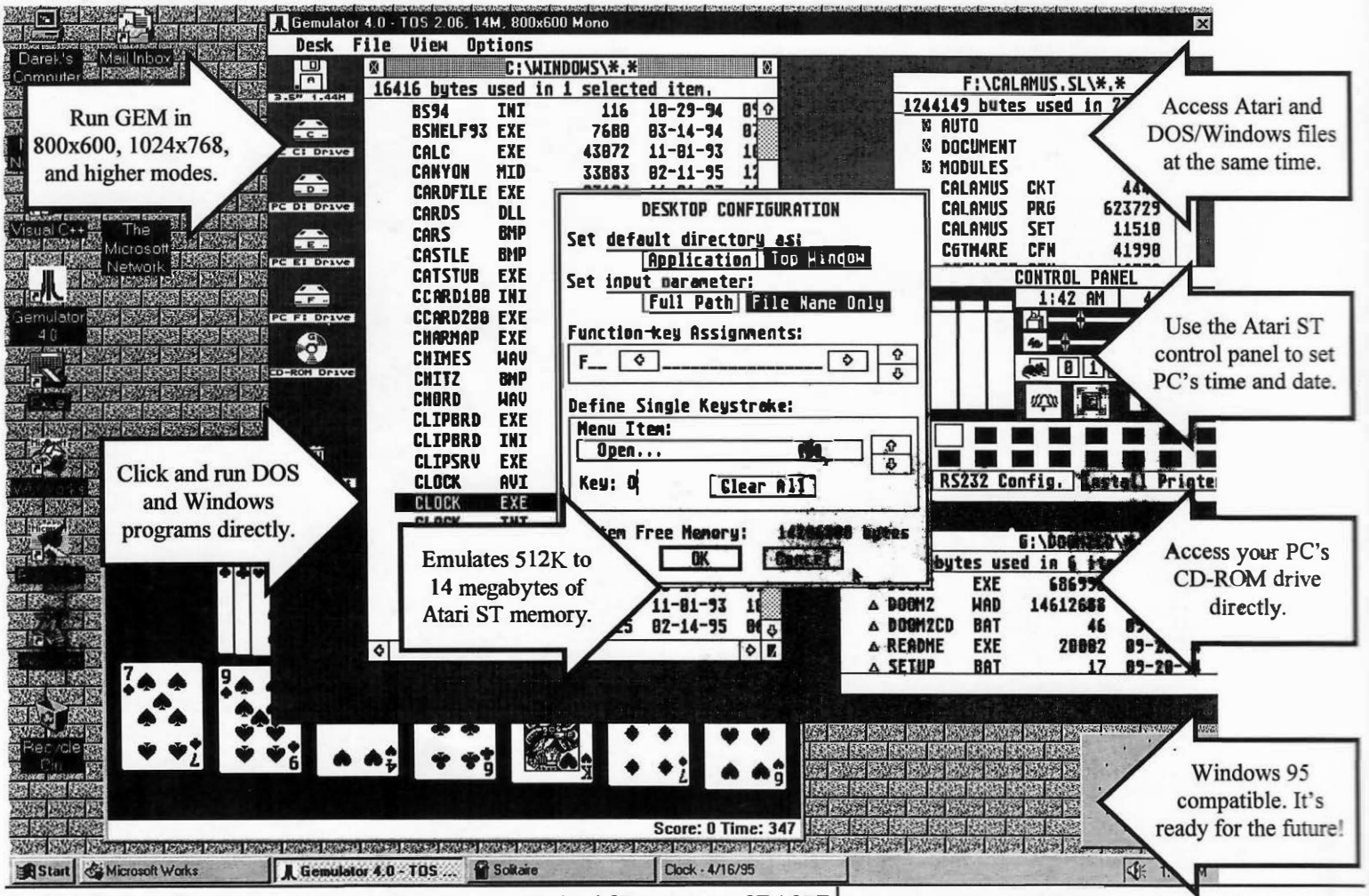
Gemulator 4.0

The Atari Mega ST / STE Emulator For Windows 95

Question: Can Windows 95 run your Atari ST, Mega ST, and STE software? **Answer:** Of course it can!

Introducing Gemulator 4.0, the Atari Mega ST / STE emulator designed specifically for use on Windows 95. It turns your PC into an Atari clone that's on par with any high end Mega ST or Atari TT030 computer - for a fraction of the price. Gemulator 4.0 supports CD-ROM, Super VGA and Moniterm graphics resolutions, MIDI ports, 14 megabytes of ST memory, joysticks, multiple modem and printer ports, easy menu based configuration, reading and writing Atari files to any hard disk partition on your PC, (DoubleSpace and Stacker drives too), and more. Grab clip art from your PC's CD-ROM drive and paste it into your Atari programs. Run multiple Atari desktops at the same time, each running a different program and in different screen resolutions! Use the Atari's desktop to copy, delete, and even run your DOS and Windows programs directly. Access your old Atari 360K and 720K floppy disks, or use the PC's 1.44M disks. Here is a sample of what the Gemulator 4.0 Atari Mega ST / STE emulator can do for you...



As this Windows 95 screen shows, you too can run your Atari ST and Mega ST / STE programs side-by-side with your MS-DOS and Windows programs. Why wait for Windows versions of your favorite Atari programs (which may or may not ever appear) when **Gemulator 4.0 runs them now!** Our users have been running Pagestream, Calamus SL, and all their other favorite Atari ST programs on their PCs since 1992.

Planning to upgrade your existing Atari ST, Mega ST / STE, Falcon, or TT030? In a word - DON'T! If you consider the cost of a TOS 2.06 upgrade ($139), Moniterm monitor ($500), 8 meg of ST RAM ($649), CD-ROM drive ($249), hard disk upgrade ($400), and 1.44M floppy ($100), you've already spent more money than the cost of a new Pentium computer with Gemulator 4.0 - and you *still* can't run Windows software!

Gemulator 4.0 plugs into your PC (in any ISA slot) and runs on any 486 or Pentium with 8 megabytes of RAM and Windows 95. Gemulator 4.0 runs at full Mega ST speed on most 486/33 and 486/50 computers, and at full Falcon speed on a 90 Mhz Pentium.

Buy it today from Toad, ATY, Run PC, B & C, FaST Club, ACN, and other dealers.

Gemulator 4.0 is available from all major Atari dealers in the United States, Canada, England, Germany, Holland, and Australia. Contact us to order Gemulator directly from us or to find out more about our products:

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